

**EXPLORING STUDENT ABSENTEEISM AT TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL  
EDUCATION COLLEGES IN NORTH WEST, BOJANALA DISTRICT**

by

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## DECLARATION

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### **EXPLORING STUDENT ABSENTEEISM AT TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COLLEGES IN NORTH WEST, BOJANALA DISTRICT.**

I Mokotsi Patricia Kasita declare that exploring student absenteeism at technical vocational education colleges in North West, Bojanala District is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher institution.



SIGNATURE

18 November 2019

DATE

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this study to my beloved Mom and Dad, Rebecca and Peter Makapane, for the love and support they gave me since I started with my studies. Being unemployed, they made it happen to hold it up to where I am now. I am very much grateful and proud of you. May the good Lord protect you and give you strength and many more days to live. Thank you very much, my dear parents.

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## ABSTRACT

Student non-attendance is a main challenge in TVET Colleges, especially in teaching and learning and the academic functioning of students. Various studies on student absenteeism and absenteeism in schools were reviewed in the literature. However, not much has been written about the challenges in TVET colleges. The focus of this research is on the three TVET College campuses in the Bojanala District in the North West Province. The qualitative method was used. Semi-structured interviews and non-participative observation were employed to gather information and the views of the participants about student absenteeism. The researcher selected the participants purposefully, as they have experienced the problem of absenteeism. Students and lecturers were selected as participants in the study. Lecturers acknowledged that the poor background of students was a contributing factor to poor attendance. The study concludes with recommendations on how to reduce the challenge of student non-attendance. The lack of transport money is a socioeconomic factor that contributes to student absenteeism in TVET colleges. It is recommended that NSFAS pays the transport money directly to the service provider. When students apply for a NSFAS bursary, they should provide proof of the transport that they use to help the bursary office in terms of transport arrangements. It is further recommended that all campuses should have student accommodation, and that bursary money should be paid directly to the accommodation services.

Key terms: Absenteeism, students, truancy, chronic absenteeism, school phobia, school refusal, TVET colleges, policies, authorised and unauthorised absenteeism.

## List of abbreviations

TVET - Technical Vocational Education and Training  
DHET - Department of Higher Education and Training  
NC(V) - National Certificate Vocational  
NQF - National Qualifications Framework  
ICASS -Internal Continuous Assessment  
ISAT - Integrated Summative Assessment Task  
POE - Portfolio of Evidence  
HOD - Head of Department  
NSFAS - National Student Financial Aid Scheme  
GPA - Grade Point Average  
PAL - Peer Academic Leaders  
ITS - Information Technology System  
APC - Academic Programme Coordinator  
D and I - Data and Information  
M and E -Monitoring and Evaluation  
SSO -Student Support Officer.  
HRDC- Human Resources Development Council

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## **CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

### **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges have a common goal, which is to produce independent students of a high standard with outstanding academic results. Furthermore, White Paper on Higher Education and Training (2013) stated that the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in South Africa intends at reinforcing and increasing the public TVET colleges so that they turn out to be institutions of excellent. TVET colleges should therefore mould students to develop a sense of pride and ownership to produce good results.

The major concern of TVET colleges is to cater for young individuals and to educate and offer training in diverse skills and knowledge that will be beneficial for employment (South Africa, 2013:11). TVET colleges predominantly offer learning and training to the mid-level abilities needed to grow the economy of South Africa. It furthermore tends to focus on careers such as engineering and construction industries, tourism and hospitality, general business and management studies (South Africa, 2013:11). This was also further echoed by the Director-General of the DHET, Mr Qonde (2015) during the promotion of the TVET College lecturer support systems.

Everything is possible through education. Education is not only disseminating the understanding and expertise to students, but it entails the actual transformation of a person to become educated. Hence TVET colleges are in place to provide mainly for individuals who have exited school, whether they have finished secondary school or not (South Africa, 2013:11). In supporting the assertion above, Nelson Mandela, the former president of the Republic of South Africa said “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”. He further stated that “education entails the transfer of knowledge and skills to ensure the success of every living human being” (Nelson Mandela foundation, 2005). TVET colleges are anticipated to play a meaningful in delivering the acute lack of abilities (Branson, Hofmeyer & Lam, 2013).

TVET colleges face challenges, such as the increasing student absenteeism rate especially in the Bojanala district. Students often and openly refuse to obey instructions, sometimes in an aggressive manner. This type of behaviour of students sparked the researcher's interest to find out the central reason for the problem. Some researchers, for instance Brener and Kann (2008) indicated that chronic student non-attendance may result in other issues such as brutality, substance abuse, poor conduct, unsafe sexual activities and teenage pregnancy. This was further supported by Dube and Orpinas (2009) who said that continued student non-attendance leads to unwanted behaviour. Cook & Ezenne (2010) further stressed that non-attendance puts students at risk.

From discussions with other lecturers at other campuses (sister campuses at Orbit TVET college) and through observation, the researcher realised that there was a high level of non-attendance amongst students in the colleges. To achieve success in any field requires discipline. In TVET colleges, for example, students are taught to be in control of them and to execute their duties without constant supervision from their lecturers. Students who stay absent from the college usually struggle and miss out on teaching and learning, which may lead to poor academic achievement. Ehiane (2014:191) further maintains that student wrongdoing negatively influences students' intellectual performance. In addition, when the students' absenteeism rate is too high, they may drop out of college, which could bring about extra challenges that could influence the future of students (Kearney, 2008; Wilkins, 2008).

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) acknowledges a clear link between student attendance and student attainment (Public Further Education and Training College Attendance and Punctuality Policy). When students miss classes for any reason, they study less and this may affect their progress. Absenteeism of students is widely debated and regarded as a vital standard that shows the nature of schooling. It is also considered as an important predictor of the students' achievement (Graeff-Martins, Oswald, Comassetto, Kieling, Goncalves & Rohde, 2006).

Non-attendance is the fundamental reason why students do not meet the requirements in the colleges. In addition, Manyau (2014:149) maintains that

educational objectives at TVET Colleges are interrupted by student wrongdoings. By staying absent without good reason, students show a lack of interest in the education provided to them. Lecturers are asking themselves questions such as “What is incorrect with our schooling?” and “Is there anything distressing students in class from schooling?” (Shute & Cooper, 2015).

When students attend college regularly, it makes it easier for them to achieve academically. Regular attendance is associated to better performance and academic achievement. It can also be linked to students who are successful in their professional lives, especially in their ability to work with others. This study focuses mainly on exploring absenteeism in TVET colleges in the Bojanala District in the North West Province.

## **1.2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

The colleges have a high absenteeism rate. It is therefore significant to conduct a study of absenteeism in the colleges. Absenteeism cannot be separated from the student as an individual. Student absenteeism has not only been a concern in TVET colleges, but it is a worldwide problem. Absenteeism whether at higher institutions, basic education or even at the workplace is an acute problem in our country directing Chauke (2012) to petition that the cost of non-attendance destroys the country's economy. The absence of students from classes is getting worse day by day. At college level students should know the impact of not attending class.

The researcher has been teaching for more than 10 years in a TVET college and has experienced the ever-growing problem of absenteeism. The researcher decided to conduct a study to explore the issue of absenteeism in an effort to come up with strategies to prevent it from recurring. Through students, the researcher can obtain accurate information about the problem of absenteeism by looking at the source of the problem. The DHET has not been very successful in finding solutions to deal with it. Up to now not much has been done to address this issue. According to South Africa, (2012: 20-22), stated TVET Colleges appear to have shortage of comprehensive rule that legalise the nature and administration of student



wrongdoing which absenteeism is an example of wrongdoing. Green Paper on Post School Education and Training (SA, 2012: xiii), in the Constitution and the Higher Education Act, confirmed that TVET Colleges are ruled by collection of legislature and legal forms. Green Paper resumes, (SA, 2012: 20-22), legislation is pierced with repetition, illogicality and discrepancies. A challenge thus presently challenging TVET Colleges is the choice of the utmost suitable of matter for procedures on student wrongdoing thus as well referring to absenteeism. The researcher's focus in this study is to research the main problems of students to find and identify the causes and effects of absenteeism.

### **1.3. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study is to make lecturers aware of and to understand the challenges and the reasons why certain students experience an attendance problem at the TVET colleges. This study will explore the high absenteeism rate and students' experiences thereof on three campuses. The main focus will be on the experiences and views of students who have a high absenteeism rate.

The researcher is of the view that the high dropout rate of TVET students is attributed to student absenteeism. The main aim of this study is to make lecturers aware of and to understand the challenges and the reasons why certain students experience an attendance problem at the TVET colleges.

### **1.4. THE RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

The main challenge of the colleges is the high rate of student absenteeism and how it affects teaching and learning. Absenteeism, especially by students who receive bursaries from the college, is increasing every year, in spite of the rules and policies in place to curb such behaviour.

The issue of student absenteeism is being raised by lecturers on several occasions during meetings. Wadesango & Machingambi, (2011:96) supported the the challenge of non-attendance is prevalent in the education system of South Africa. Previously individual students were held liable for non-attendance and truancy

(Hartnett, 2007:41). However, today not much is being done to find out the main causes and reasons for student absenteeism.

Student absenteeism is one of the major challenges in the administration and management of classes. Kousalya, Ravindranath and VizayaKumar (2006:1) maintain that student non-attendance is a problem in colleges. Fisher Townsend, Chikobu, Lombard, & King (2010:249) contends that the main hindrance to tackling the challenge of non-attendance is the shortage of study on the absenteeism in South African colleges.

Kousalya et al. (2006:2) further argue that even though student absenteeism is always discussed in academic circles, very few studies are conducted on this phenomenon. This also applies to the TVET colleges in the Bojanala District in the North West Province, where the first research of this kind was conducted.

### **1.5. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Absenteeism is a common phenomenon in most education institutions. Many students tend to stay absent. Most students do not see absenteeism as a serious matter and do not realise that this will impact their future negatively. As a lecturer, the researcher is responsible for the class attendance register, and this is how she became aware that the absenteeism rate in the college is very high. Non-attendance has serious consequences for both students and lecturers. For this reason, the researcher wants to investigate the factors that contribute to student absenteeism.

Absenteeism has many negative effects, for instance, an unpleasant classroom environment especially for students who attend regularly. Absenteeism is also a cause of irritation to lecturers, as it affects the lecturer's daily preparation and lesson planning. Further, absenteeism affects the motivation of many students in the lecture room (Thornton, Darmody & McCoy, 2013). In some instances, lecturers used the valuable time of students who attend regularly to re-teach lessons to students who do not attend regularly.

Furthermore, educational resources are also wasted because of absenteeism. Absenteeism contradicts the college policy, as teaching and learning cannot happen without rules in place (Taylor & Ryan, 2005) In addition, students who do not attend classes miss out on the intellectual and social experiences brought on by the college. These students often obtain lower marks and their performance is very poor.

#### **1.5.1. Research questions**

Based on the problem statement the main research question is the following:  
How do TVET colleges experience student absenteeism?

#### **1.5.2. Subquestions**

Based on the problem statement the following research questions are formulated:

- What are the perceived personal factors of students that may contribute to high absenteeism?
- How is student absenteeism managed in TVET colleges?

#### **1.5.3. Objectives of the study**

The research objectives are the following:

- To be aware and understand student personal factors contributing to high absenteeism .
- To provide the mechanism that can be used to supplement on what the college is using to manage student absenteeism.

## **1.6 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The results could help college personnel to deal with and handle students with an absenteeism problem. The colleges may use the approaches recommended from the findings to deal with the problem of absenteeism. A better understanding of the reasons for excessive absenteeism could also be useful for administrators in developing attendance policies and procedures designed to improve college attendance. Furthermore, the outcomes in this study will contribute to the body of knowledge which could be shared with all stakeholders to find ways of dealing with student absenteeism.

In addition, the results may lead to an understanding of the factors that cause student absenteeism, which will benefit our society, the students as well as the lecturers. There is a great demand for skills and skilled graduates in our country that justifies the need for more effective, life-changing approaches especially to meet the challenges facing our country.

The study assisted the researcher to reveal and explore crucial areas of absenteeism in the educational process. Revealing crucial areas in absenteeism brought newly discovered assumptions in learning.

In addition, the contribution of this research will also serve as advice and direction to colleges. It will help colleges to deal with absenteeism from an informed perspective. This, in turn, will help lecturers and management to employ appropriate strategies to lead and deal with adolescents, and understand their social problems. This research will focus mainly on the challenge of student non-attendance. Therefore, this research will help all groups, especially the college management, to improve the college

Researchers are of the view that all the reasons for student absenteeism are not known and that very little has been done with regard to absenteeism in TVET colleges (Singh, 2011; Kousalya, Ravindranath and Vizayakumor, 2006 & Nyathi,

2005). Therefore, the findings and recommendations from this study could serve as baseline information for my research on student absenteeism

### **1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This research was conducted on three campuses in different areas of the North West, Bojanala District, and the findings are not generalisable to TVET colleges in other provinces or districts. The researcher could not control certain factors.

Some areas where the study was conducted were not the same in terms of the following:

- (1) The colleges differed in terms of demographics, especially the areas in which they are situated.
- (2) The biographical information differed because of the individuality of participants.
- (3) This study was limited in scope, resources and time.
- (4) The study was limited to a certain number of students and lecturers.

### **1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Bowen (2005) stated that students who attend college regularly are more successful than students who frequently stay absent. Absenteeism is also a cause of distress in society and has destructive results. According to the DHET (2015) the high rate of absenteeism calls for the establishment of attendance policies and procedures for students. The focus of the literature is on the phenomenon of student absenteeism and the consequences of high student absenteeism in the TVET colleges.

Terms such as “chronic truancy” and “student absenteeism” are used interchangeably throughout this study. The relationship between chronic truancy and student absenteeism will be clearly outlined in this study. Student absenteeism seems to be a problem in TVET colleges. The extensive bunking of classes, truancy and chronic absenteeism emphasise the prevalence of this problem. Truancy is defined as staying away from college without good reason while chronic absenteeism refers to missing a significant percentage of college days. Child Trends Databank (2014) defines truancy as repeated unexcused absences by students and chronic absenteeism as missing college over and over again for any reason.

Absenteeism is a severe problem, especially when students stay absent without permission. Chronic absenteeism can cause students to obtain unsatisfactory results in their studies, which could result in students engaging in substance abuse and eventually dropping out of college. Students may also eventually engage in undesirable criminal activities. In addition, Ferrel, Nance and Torres (2013) state that chronic non-attendance is closely connected with teenage pregnancy, violence, substance abuse, and so on.

Absenteeism is defined as staying away from college. Psychologists frequently describe absenteeism as school fear or school rebuff, separation and nervousness (Kearney, 2008). Reid (2008) and Wilkins (2008) define student absenteeism as not attending school. Dube and Orpinas (2009) describe absenteeism as refusing to attend school. Student non-attendance in TVET colleges is a complicated matter and is increasingly becoming a more interesting phenomenon for researchers and policy makers.

When students frequently absent themselves from colleges, they lose out on extensive short-term educational outcomes. They also miss out on assignments and important learning activities. As a result, students lose focus, are not able to learn at the same pace as others and find it difficult to catch up with the work. By missing college class work, learners perform poorly in their studies.

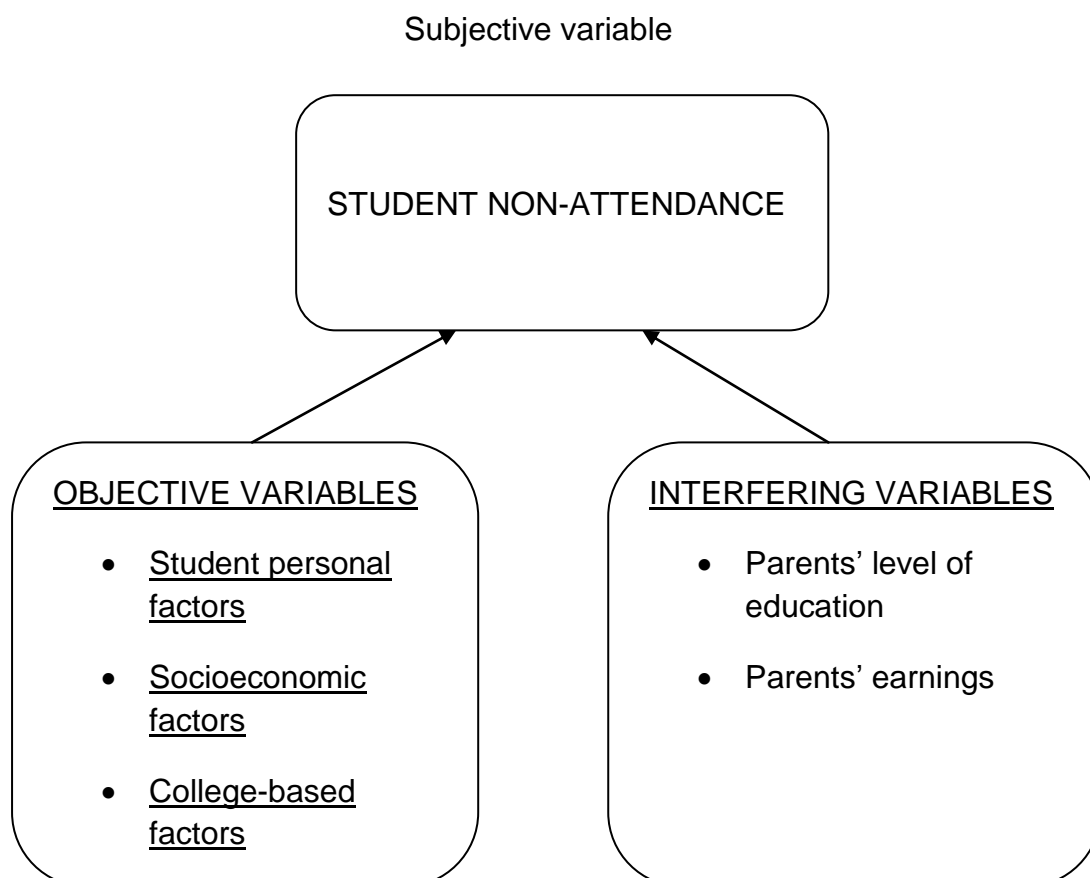
A more detailed literature review will be presented in the next chapter. The causes and reasons for student non-attendance are explained in detail.

From the above literature, the researcher will respond to the following inquiry: How do TVET colleges experience student absenteeism?

## 1.9 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The study will be grounded in the conceptual framework represented in Table 1.9 below.

Table1.9: Conceptual framework



According to Regoniel (2015) described a conceptual framework as it characterises the researcher creation of information on how to clarify an experience. Furthermore, Regoniel (2015), stated that a conceptual framework plots out the procedures needed in the process of the report given prior understanding of other investigators opinions and thoughts on the topic of the study. Further stated that it is the investigators knowledge of how the specific variables in the research relate with another, thus, it classifies the variables needed in the study. The purpose of the conceptual framework is to focus on the variables in the research. For example, the

variables in a study of student non-attendance are personal factors, socioeconomic factors and college-based factors. The intervening variables are the students' feelings about the subject and lecturers, low family income, and lack of expectations about learning. Dependent variables are the students' non-attendance and students' personal factors such as feelings towards lecturers, which lead to deprived attendance as a result of students losing interest in attending such lectures.

A high student absenteeism rate may have many negative outcomes. These outcomes may have an impact on college systems such as the different activities of the college. Students may engage in inappropriate behaviour such as substance abuse, violence, and even drop out of college. It is imperative for lecturers to have an understanding of why students absent themselves in order to assess behavioural factors that may help them to overcome the challenge of non-attendance. It is common for students with different cultural backgrounds and personalities to show behavioural problems which contribute to absenteeism.

According to the literature there is a link between truancy and chronic absenteeism. Truancy, as mentioned before, is repeated unexcused absence. The students may start using drugs, fall pregnant, and so on, which may lead to them dropping out. Such behaviour is often seen as wrongful conduct. Chronic absenteeism is described as repeatedly missing college for any reason, and is seen as all absences related to students' general presence (Henderson, Hill & Norton, 2014:7).

### **1.9.1 Systematic theory used in managing student absenteeism.**

According to Greenfield (2011:531) the systematic theory focuses on individuals and their relationships. In using an ecosystem approach to control student absenteeism, it was clear that there is a link between student non-attendance and other individuals, the maturity level of absentees, and the environment in which they live (Mc Guckin & Minton, 2014:37). Bronfenbrenner's Ecological and Bioecological theories were employed in this study.

The systematic theory was employed to explore the challenge of student non-attendance in the TVET colleges. Systems theory was used to determine issues and



give direction on a plan of action. After identifying the problem, it will be easier for management to deal with the problem in a better way. Colleges are social or open systems in which they cooperate with other systems. The following is the framework of concepts that was used to conceptualise the focus of the study, using systems theory:

- The college environment
- The absenteeism policy
- The attendance registers
- The lecturer-learner relationship
- Communication

- **The college environment**

Different situations influence student behaviour in colleges. The college students are usually young adults and adolescents. At this stage, protective factors are critical, as students are at a developmental level. Roffey (2008:31) referred to the college as a microsystem characterised by connectedness, trust and the quality of relationships. The college is also seen as an organisation.

- **The absenteeism policy**

It is compulsory for all students to attend college although some students may have valid reasons such as illness for staying absent. In such instances learners are required to submit a proof of absence.

- **The attendance registers**

Registers are in place to verify attendance and to record student attendance every time lecturers make formal contact with them. Seniors monitor the registers regularly. Information is recorded diligently and accurately, which gives a true picture of each student's attendance. Students are therefore required to sign the register as proof that they were in class.

- **The lecturer-student relationship**

The relationship should be based on interpersonal interaction. The relationship a lecturer has with the student will influence the student's behaviour and could

determine the academic success of a student. Good interaction between lecturers and students and a stable feedback system will intensify teaching. According to Varga (2017:32) maintained that student achievement in the lecture room is the effect of a positive lecturer-student relationship.

- **Communication**

Communication will influence the climate of a class environment, which may have an influence on student absenteeism. Barlie, Donohue, Anthony, Weaver, Henrich. (2012:19) contended that optimistic lecturer personality nonetheless required to be balanced by operational communication style to attain students' intellectual results. Communication is beneficial for all organisational stakeholders, and it is core in building shared reality and a system of meanings. Effective communication takes place if there is a good relationship across all levels in the organisation. Communication forms an integral part of organisational systems and the smooth operation of an organisation.

## **1.10 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

The researcher decided to employ a qualitative method by using a case study approach. Cohen, Manion and Morison (2007) stated that a case study is a bounded technique, and the instances are reviewed inside a particular or identifiable timeframe and enquiry framework. In a qualitative study, the main aim is to gain the depth of the facts rather than the quantity of understanding. Maree (2007) says that the focus in qualitative research is on a realistic approach and the researcher needs to have knowledge of the problem within the practical setting.

This methodology also allows the researcher to gather information directly from the participants by listening to their views, their thinking and assumptions. The participants can express their views, ideas, feelings and experiences about the topic under investigation. The qualitative approach in this study helped to uncover the reasons for the non-attendance of classes and absenteeism by the college students.

The participant observation and interviews are closely connected in qualitative research and are useful for collecting and analysing information. The researcher will use a case study approach to investigate the challenges faced in Orbit TVET campuses because case studies outline the full picture of a problem and give a clear understanding of a different situation. A case study also emphasises the comprehensive contingent of events and conditions (Yin, 1994:1). This study will entail an in-depth investigation of the views of the participants regarding student absenteeism (Creswell, 2009).

The college under investigation is unique because of the vast area it serves and the nature of the challenges experienced. Therefore, the researcher is not looking to generalise the research findings. The main weakness of the case study method is that one cannot generalise the facts. The researcher used semi-structured interviews with lecturers and students on each of the campuses. Two lecturers and four current students were interviewed. The researcher also observed students on the campus. Both interviews and observations were employed to increase the trustworthiness of the research. The results of the observation served to confirm the information gathered from the interviews.

#### **1.10.1 Research paradigm**

Students as individuals will be used to explain the actual facts of the problem. This study will therefore bring to light the interpretive paradigms which envisage the student as most involved in a problem studied. Explanatory studies depend on the personal involvement of participants. Interpretation and observation support the interpretative paradigm, which means that information about the event is gathered through observation and interpretation by drawing inferences between the data and some theoretical systems (Aikenhead, 1997).

Within the explanatory model, the researcher tries to understand the participants' experiences by communicating with them (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). This approach therefore allowed the researcher to interpret the involvement and views of the participants. Creswell (1992:51) argued that this type of study outlines the real-world experiences of individuals with regard to certain

circumstances. The researcher trusts that facts and perceptions are socially interpreted. The ability to see and involve the participants controls the reality of a situation or experiences. However, it is also true that one's actual experiences depend on his or her personal understanding of a general situation (Wahyuni, 2013).

Through the interpretive paradigm, it was easier for the researcher to observe the causes and reasons of student absenteeism at Orbit TVET campuses. This provided the researcher with an opportunity to interact with the participants and to gain information about their experiences of absenteeism. Through the interpretive paradigm the researcher was able to draw a clear and logical conclusion of the views of the participants with the understanding that people may view the same phenomenon differently.

#### **1.10.2 Research site**

TVET colleges in the Bojanala District in the North West Province were selected.

#### **1.10.3 Research participants and sampling**

The researcher purposefully selected a few students of different ages and perspectives as well as lecturers. These participants have experienced the problem of absenteeism. The research was conducted at three TVET campuses in the Bojanala District. In choosing participants with different perspectives, the researcher expected different and similar opinions of the topic under investigation. Students were identified based on the list of students who failed because of their absenteeism and those who were frequently absent. The researcher contacted and identified the participants, explained the research project and obtained their consent. The criteria the researcher used to select participants included the following:

- Full-time college students
- Males and females (two males and two females were interviewed)
- Full-time and permanent lecturers (two lecturers with three years lecturing experience at TVET colleges)

The researcher specified the target number needed for the research according to the above criteria. The above participants were also chosen because they were likely to have knowledge and more information about the phenomenon under investigation. The participants were interviewed, some of which were given questionnaires to complete.

In this research, non-probability, purposive sampling was used. As the researcher, I chose a group of students with knowledge and experience about absenteeism. According to Cohen, Manion and Morison (2007), non-probability sampling is when the researcher selects a certain group that excludes the broader population; in this case the researcher selected the group with the most experience (in student absenteeism). Purposive sampling was used, as it allowed the researcher to select the students based on their knowledge and experience of the phenomenon under investigation.

#### **1.10.4 Data collection technique**

The researcher must be familiar with different data collection techniques. It is also imperative that the researcher understands both the benefits and disadvantages of the data collection techniques.

##### **1.10.4.1 Semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were used, as this allowed the participants to give their specific opinions and views about the causes of student non-attendance. Individual interviews were held with lecturers in their own classes.

##### **1.10.4.2 Non-participant observation**

Non-participant observation was used to generate data on student absenteeism. Through observation, the researcher had a clear perception of the setting and problem of the study.

#### **1.10.5 Triangulation**

The researcher used multiple methods to research or investigate the same research question in the hope of getting the same results. Data obtained from these

methods were compared, which is an important approach to verify the outcomes of the study.

#### **1.10.6 Data analysis**

The researcher transcribed data obtained from the interviews and analysed the data by writing summative notes of the important aspects. The researcher coded the results of the interviews. Coding is the process whereby raw data is transformed into a standardised form (Babbie, 2007). The data were interpreted and organised into themes and categories. The organisation into themes and categories was guided by the research questions and objectives. In this study the coded information will not be outlined in the original format but it will be interpreted and represented by the researcher (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Finally, a summary of all the results was put together in which subthemes were used to determine the themes in which to report the findings of the research. After the provisional results were obtained, the participants had an opportunity to check and verify the written version of their responses in preliminary themes.

#### **1.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

The study aims to achieve credibility, dependability, conformability and transferability. Credibility helps and is necessary for the results to be trustworthy. In this study the participants provided knowledge which was credible. The communication process was also most important in creating trustworthiness of the knowledge.

Trustworthiness of the data can be acquired through procedures to maximise credibility, by comparing it to the various views and approaches derived from literature to describe the absenteeism trends of the college students. Audio-taped data and data written during the observation are available as documents of the research process and outcomes. In this way, students' perceptions, insights and interpretations are available.

### **1.11.1 Credibility**

The objective of credibility is to show that the study will be conducted in such a way to ascertain that the subject is properly selected and described. The researcher ensured credibility by preparing important information in the form of notes from students. These notes were thoroughly studied to establish their importance to the research study. The data were analysed once again and given back to the role players to make sure that the information they have provided was correct.

Trustworthiness requires that the role players regard the conclusions as reliable. The point of the qualitative study is to identify the experiences of the participants. The participants are allowed to gain access to the outcomes of the research to authenticate the originality thereof. The participants were not asked to identify themselves or to write their names down. This added to the trust relationship to ensure that the participants share accurate and reliable information with the researcher.

### **1.11.2 Dependability, conformity and transferability**

Dependability refers to the consistency and accuracy of the results and findings of the research with the information collected. The researcher attained conformity in the study by remaining unbiased and not manipulating the outcomes in the research. The researcher also did not force or guide the participants on what to say. Transferability was attained through the study's discussion and results, which advanced the theoretical undertakings of the study. To permit transferability, complete element factors were provided to determine whether the current environment was the same as the other environment, and the results could be applicable to other situations or less similar contexts.

## **1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The researcher complied with the requirements of the Ethics Committee by first requesting permission from the University of South Africa's Ethics Committee to conduct the research. Once the authorisation was given, the researcher applied for permission from the DHET to conduct the research at the TVET colleges in the Bojanala District in the North West Province.

The researcher also asked the consent of each participant before asking the questions. Each participant was informed that permission had already been granted by senior authorities. Participants were assured of the privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of their individual identities. The participants' real names were not used. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time during the course of the study if they wished to do so.

The researcher followed the ethical code by respecting all participants and treating each participant as a unique human being. Ethics were observed in the execution of the study. The researcher ensured that no participant was exposed to plans and concepts that were not meant for the study project, its methodology and goals. In this regard, privacy had to be ensured in every situation during data collection. The documentation containing the responses were protected and regarded as confidential. Mouton (2006:238, 239) emphasises the issue of acceptable knowledge about the ethical and unethical issues in conducting the study. The researcher considered the following in respect of the participants:

- Protection of participants
- Privacy of all data concerning the participants
- The significance of recognising the participants' contribution.

The researcher assured the participants, as suggested by Gonzalez and Villalba (2018:151), that their support is appreciated and that their anonymity and confidential information will be protected at all times. Therefore, the researcher explained the purpose, the possible risks, the use of data and benefits of participating in the research study. If the participants felt uncomfortable to respond to specific questions at any time, they would be informed that they have the option to withdraw and not answer the questions. In such instances they would be assured that their responses would not be used in compiling the research report. Furthermore, participants were assured that all information provided by them would be treated as confidential. In addition, all their responses would remain anonymous to protect their identities unless the participants give permission to have their identity revealed.



### **1.12.1 Informed consent**

In obtaining consent information, all possible benefits and shortcomings were explained to the role players. Letters informing the participants about the research were provided by the researcher. The information in the letters was explained verbally and participants were given the opportunity to ask questions. Consequently, the participants' autographs and the researcher's signature served as proof of approval.

### **1.12.2 Privacy and confidentiality**

To safeguard the identity of the role players, college names and the participants' identity remain confidential. Responses would therefore be anonymous. The researcher explained to the participants not to use their names and assured them that the researcher would treat their information as confidential. Furthermore, the researcher explained that it is the right of the individual to choose how they want to disclose their views and how they want to act. In this regard, Strydom (2007:61) described privacy as "a component of personal confidentiality", while confidentiality is about keeping data private.

## **1.13 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the introduction and the background of the research, which highlighted absenteeism, were presented. The aim of the chapter was to conceptualise some reasons and the sources of non-attendance that will assist in reducing absenteeism. The research problem highlighted the high rate of absenteeism that poses a serious challenge to both students and lecturers. The purpose of the study is to make lecturers aware of and to understand the challenges and the reasons why certain students experience an attendance problem at the TVET colleges. The chapter also covers the research question, objectives, the rationale and significance of the study.

## 1.14 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

**Student** refers to a person who attends a higher education institution or a person who is formally engaged in learning.

**Truancy** is the repeated unexcused absences by students (Child Trends Databank, 2014).

**Chronic absenteeism** is missing college over and over again for any reason (Child Trends Databank, 2014).

**Absenteeism** is defined as staying away from college.

**School refusal behaviour** refers to adolescent-driven denial to show up at school and/or attending classes for the whole period (Kearney & Silverman, 1996).

**School phobia** is defined as a phenomenon where a student is fearful and unwilling to attend school due to circumstances surrounding that student (Moseki, 2004:22).

## 1.15 CHAPTER OUTLINE

In **Chapter 1** the research project is introduced. This chapter provides the background of the study, rationale and the problem statement. The research question, objectives and research methodology are also outlined in this chapter.

**Chapter 2** outlines the literature review. It provides an overview of the high rate of student absenteeism at TVET colleges.

**Chapter 3** comprises a detailed description of the research methodology and research design. The procedures on the selection of participants, data collection methods and analysis of data are explained in full.

**Chapter 4** presents the results and findings of the research. The findings are also interpreted.

**Chapter 5** provides a summary of the study and concludes with recommendations on how absenteeism could be reduced at TVET colleges.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

The context and the outline of the research were presented in the previous chapter. In Chapter 2 relevant studies on student non-attendance and the administration thereof are discussed. The difficulties caused by student non-attendance are explored, followed by a discussion on corrective measures in dealing with the issue. Student non-attendance is a very complicated matter. Student attendance is also caused by many factors, which will enable administrators to directly address the problem.

In South Africa, many TVET college students come from underprivileged families who experience different challenges, such as socioeconomic problems. It is particularly difficult in TVET colleges where lecturers are dealing with adolescent students, most of whom are already parents and some heading families. Not much has been written in the literature about student absenteeism in TVET colleges, but this does not mean that the issue of student non-attendance does not exist. In this regard, Case and Jet (2007:19) stated that there must be actions or procedures to minimise the problem of non-attendance.

To clarify the concept of non-attendance, the literature review commences with the policy framework and education policy that regulate student attendance at colleges. An evaluation of the reasons and causes of student absenteeism follows. Authorised and unauthorised non-attendance is explained in detail, as it is extremely important to distinguish between valid and invalid causes of non-attendance.

Chapter 2 will assess how non-attendance affects students and the actions that need to be taken to administer student non-attendance in various circumstances. In many instances non-attendance affects the level of productivity, particularly the certification rate of colleges. Absenteeism also affects the future of students negatively.

Researchers like Kumar-Raj (2011) provided proof that student non-attendance may lead to serious problems and may cause students not to achieve their set goals. For example, student dropout and poor academic achievement in colleges are some of the problems caused by continued student non-attendance (Kumar-Raj, 2011). Non-attendance has an impact on the teaching and learning of students. In a lecture,

students connect with the lecturers, observe them and identify with them as their role models. However, when students do not attend lectures, this is not possible, which may consequently impact students' professional growth.

An in-depth conceptual framework will be provided in this chapter to equip the researcher to interpret the information gained through the interviews. In addition, possible strategies and advantages will be discussed in this chapter, which will enable the college management to deal with the challenge of student non-attendance.

## **2.2. CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS**

The research will focus on adolescents who are mainly the students in TVET colleges. The colleges are public colleges, and these adolescents are compelled to acquire education in terms of the Department of Higher and Education Training (DHET) policy. Numerous terms are closely connected to and used interchangeably with student non-attendance. The concepts include "truancy" and "school phobia". Student non-attendance is a major challenge to professionalism and it is common amongst students in the South African college context.

In this study, "non-attendance" and "truancy" will be used interchangeably, as the terms are similar in meaning with slight differences in context or implementation. Wittenberg (2005:77) explains that truancy is a consequence of non-attendance and absenteeism is a consequence of truancy. Absenteeism could take many forms. It is therefore important to make a distinction between authorised and unauthorised non-attendance.

Non-attendance can relate to a full day or part of the day. For example, students may stay away from all the periods, or attend some of the periods and bunk some.

In this regard, Kearney (2008:452) says that non-attendance could either be valid or unacceptable absence from college. It is important to conceptualise student non-attendance clearly to prevent all students who are not attending regularly from being labelled negatively. As a case in point, McCray (2006:31) described truancy as not attending college without a valid reason and linked it to students experiencing major problems in their lives such as taking part in violence or belonging to gangs.

Therefore, to label all student non-attendance as morally bad may cause students who do not attend regularly to be associated with wrongful conduct (Child Trends Data Bank, 2015:2).

Chronic absenteeism is when a student fails to attend lessons for a number of subsequent college days (Child Trends Data Bank, 2015:2). According to Henderson, Hill and Norton (2014:7) chronic absenteeism is viewed the same with every absence. Whether absenteeism is for subsequent days or not, or authorised or not, it is a concept linked to a student's comprehensive or general attendance. According to the Policy on Learner Attendance (DBE, RSA, 2010:7), chronic absenteeism is regarded as "continuous absence" if a student fails to attend ten subsequent days in public schools or colleges.

Kearney (2008:276, 564) recognises the fact that various researchers and professionals use various propositions, outlines, perspectives, terms and bases to address the problem of non-attendance. Reid (2005:59) pointed out additional types of non-attendance, which include not attending certain lectures, post-registration absence, college refusal and school phobia. This shows the various perceptions of absenteeism. The trend of non-attendance commences early in students and becomes worse as time goes on during the year. Interestingly, students who stay absent are often seen on and around the college premises.

### **2.2.1. Absenteeism**

Absenteeism is defined as staying away from college. In this regard, Kearney (2008:257-282) distinguished between permissible and unjustifiable non-attendance. Permissible non-attendance can be as a result of illness or injuries, while unjustifiable non-attendance is inexcusable absence relating to students rebuffing to go to college.

### **2.2.2. Truancy**

Many authors provided different definitions of truancy. Child Trends Databank (2014), for example, describes truancy as persistent unexcused absences by students. Moseki (2004:22) explained that truancy is closely associated with partial non-attendance before closing time. Truancy can therefore broadly be described as unauthorised absence from college.

Truancy is defined differently in different countries and research studies. Every country has their own way of explaining truancy based on their culture (Strand, 2012). In Kansas, truancy is defined as skipping three unexcused days in a row, five unexcused days in a semester, or seven unexcused days in a school year (School Attendance, Curriculum and Accreditation, 2012). In certain countries absence is also referred to as desertion, which is explained as a student leaving college for three days or more without an acceptable motive or reason (De Witte & Csillag, 2012). In other countries, however, absence is simply indicated as non-attendance. In Europe, according to Claes, Hooge and Reeskens (2009), absence is explained as unlawful truancy absence.

From a South African point of view, Moseki (2004:21) stated that most students prefer to use the term “bunking”, the more informal term for “absconding” when referring to truancy.

Students who are not always at college and miss their lectures often become involved in complex situations. According to Henry (2010), students who always miss lectures are more likely to use drugs. This was supported by Chimwamurombe (2011), who said that students that miss lectures, very often become involved in drug use.

In this study, “student absenteeism” will be the preferred term, as too many different meanings are attached to “truancy”, which is used inconsistently in different countries and studies as well as by different authors. The term “student

absenteeism” incorporates all student absence, which could include excused absence or unexcused absence.

### **2.2.3. School phobia**

School phobia is related to the term “student absenteeism”, and refers to a phenomenon where students are not willing to attend college and persuade their parents to allow them to stay at home. The parents are therefore aware of the students’ absence. Moseki (2004:16) indicated that with respect to school phobia the parents are very likely afraid of failure and are more concerned about the wellbeing of their children.

### **2.2.4. School refusal**

The term “school refusal” refers to a situation where students refuse to go school or when they suddenly absent themselves from school or college for an extended period. School refusal, literally referred to as school phobia (Moseki, 2004:10), is a form of absenteeism where students try to influence parents to allow them to stay at home. Such students are extremely tense about going to college. According to Tyrell (2005:148) these students display visible physical and emotional symptoms, anxiety or depression.

TVET colleges deal with adolescents. In this study, the term “school refusal” will be used, which will generally refer to the absence of adolescents for two or more days per week; these students do not show any signs of physical illness.

### **2.2.5. Authorised and unauthorised absenteeism**

Absenteeism could be distinguished as authorised and unauthorised absenteeism. Authorised and unauthorised non-attendance may occur for part of the day or the full day, and for acceptable or unacceptable reasons.

According to the DHET Public Further Education and Training College Attendance and Punctuality Policy (2014), authorised absence is described as staying away from college during college hours with the consent of the lecturer. The college grants approval in advance to the student to stay absent for valid reasons (Thambirajah, Grandison & De Hayes, 2008:12).



There must be authentic reasons for authorised non-attendance. Authentic reasons for authorised non-attendance may include instances such as students going to doctor, attending funerals, appearing in court and participating in sports events.

Unauthorised absenteeism is absence of a student from a lecture without valid reasons given by parents for staying absent, and it involves skipping lectures, missing certain periods, and playing truancy. In some families, parents often encourage unauthorised absenteeism by expecting their children to do household work in order to boost the family income.

### **2.3. THE ROLE OF COLLEGE MANAGEMENT IN ADDRESSING STUDENT ABSENTEEISM**

In every TVET college and throughout history, students are consistently held responsible for poor attendance, and little effort is being made to understand the student's individual needs and the factors that may cause non-attendance. Garcia-Gracia (2008:276) therefore proposed that the cause of non-attendance should be investigated and explored over and above the standard and reactive action that results in more non-attendance.

According to TVET college policies,( DHET Public Further Education and Training College Attendance and Punctuality Policy (2014), in terms of the factors beyond the student's control that may cause the student not to attend classes, the student should complete an attendance accountability form and return the completed form to the head of department (HOD) responsible for attendance of students. Every student should receive a response from the college regarding his/her presence once a month.

During the induction of students at the beginning of the academic year and for every subsequent reporting period, management states the total number of days that the student should attend. The Department of Higher and Education Training policy also states that students will be permitted to write examinations for every subject for which they have attained 80% attendance per subject. This was emphasised in the Memorandum (46 of 2016),that students at TVET Colleges will solely be permitted

admission to the national exams if their class attendance is above 80%. If the student is absent within 20% of the expected total attendance and does not provide the necessary evidence, the days of such absence shall be deducted from the 20% days.

Evidence that can be considered as valid for absence must include features such as the logo, trademark, contact details, signature and the title of the person or organisation issuing it. If a student is absent because of illness, it should be supported by an original medical or registered traditional healer's certificate. Proof of court appearances, attendance of funerals, spiritual and religious holidays, driving tests and curriculum-related external events or work placements should be submitted to the HOD.

### **2.3.1. The procedure for monitoring and recording the attendance of students**

It is important that every college supports and monitors student attendance. Weideman, Goga, Lopez, Mayet, Macun and Barry (2007) point out that the percentage of student non-attendance in South Africa is more or less the same as the average percentage of non-attendance in other countries, that is, between 6 and 8%. However, there is a substantial difference in the non-attendance rate of South Africa, depending on the country the rate is being compared with (Weideman et al., 2007).

In most instances HODs regulate the precise number of college days which will be utilised in order to assess the attendance percentage per period. The HOD determines the number of lecturing days as well as the number of days constituting 80% and 20% of the number of lecturing days. This information is placed on the notice boards at the beginning of the study period. Students are requested to submit evidence of authorised non-attendance to their HOD for authorisation within 48 hours once they are back in the lecture rooms.

The HOD will then determine whether the document is authentic and adheres to the policy of approved reasons for absenteeism. The HOD writes the following student information at the top of the document: surname, initials, student number and course. The HOD writes the specific dates for which absence was approved by

indicating A(R) (absent with reason) and attaches his/her signature (DHET Public Further Education and Training College Attendance and Punctuality Policy 2014),

The HOD will make a copy of the document; the dates on the copy are highlighted and given to student as proof that absence has been approved. The student shows this document to the lecturer as confirmation that the dates were approved. The lecturer will add (R) (reason) in red above the inserted A. The HOD transfers the approved dates to the Attendance Control File with a summary of the student's information.

Lecturers are also responsible for keeping attendance registers to monitor student attendance at lectures. Monitoring student attendance is critical, as it provides management with information such as budgetary information to be made available to, for example, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). This information will serve as an early warning sign for lecturers of students who are likely to underperform. Even though non-attendance is being monitored and recorded in colleges, absenteeism continues to be a problem in TVET colleges.

### **2.3.2. Advantages of decreasing student absenteeism**

If student absenteeism is reduced, lecturers will be able to continue effectively with teaching and learning without any interruptions. The lecturers would be able to complete the curriculum. If students attend regularly, it will impact their performance in examinations positively. The reduction of absenteeism can ultimately uplift students from their poor socioeconomic conditions and grant them opportunities of good health and possible future success. UNESCO (2009b) further stated that good attendance and good education further increase efficiency and decrease poverty.

## **2.4. SYSTEMATIC THEORY USED IN MANAGING STUDENT ABSENTEEISM**

In terms of the systematic theory, everything, including people and their environment are connected and interrelated. According to Greenfield (2011:531) the systematic theory is about individuals as well as the connections in their relationships. The

ecosystem approach to control student absenteeism will examine the connection between student non-attendance and other individuals, as well the absentees' maturity level and the environment in which they live (McGuckin & Minton, 2014:37).

#### **2.4.1. Bronfenbrenner's ecological and bioecological theories**

As stated by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model, human maturity is a functional instrument that spells out human development in relation to the social surroundings or context. This model's theoretical framework shows how the student as an individual is interrelated with the social environment or context as well as the internal structures.

According to Bronfenbrenner's ecosystem theory, an individual's environment is divided into different spheres, four of which are the individual student's context. The spheres may intensify the conception in relation to the elements of the absent student's living environment such as his/her family and college.

Lochmiller (2013:22) stated that various authors disputed the use of the ecosystem theory as an approach which recognises the fundamental elements regarding non-attendance. More attention is given to the ecosystem theory because of individual's behaviour and his or her connections (Kourkoutas, Plexousakis & Georgiadi, 2010:4774).

Bronfenbrenner organised contexts of development into four levels of external influence, namely the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem. Swart and Pettipher (2005) specified that all four systems interact with the chronosystem.

The microsystem refers to the individual's direct relationships with family, the college and the peer group. This is when the students connect and have good relationships with lecturers, and make friends with other students and teams. The mesosystem entails the connections and interactions between the student's microsystems: everything that happens at home could influence the student's attendance and interest in college. McWhirter, J., McWhirter, B., McWhirter, E. & McWhirter, R. (2007) stated that according to the ecological model the student can only grow and

develop if the student's connections and interactions with microsystems like the college, parents, lecturers and peers are appropriate and certain.

The exosystem is an environment in which the adolescents are not directly involved, but it affects them anyway, such as the education system or the health system. The exosystem therefore comprises connections with systems that do not influence the individual directly. An example of an exosystem is the public policies relating to the education or health sector (McWhirter et al., 2007). The health policy may affect the student indirectly. For example, if a student has a persistent illness, he or she will face a challenge at college if there is a lack of health facilities.

The macrosystem relates to the cultural elements such as values and beliefs of a certain society which may affect some systems, for instance race relationships, cultural beliefs and democracy doctrines that support social justice. Cultural beliefs, for example, could involve accepting the fact that female students may not attend as frequently as male students as a result of possible pregnancy. Finally, the chronosystem consists of all the experiences and events that occur in the individual's life. Bronfenbrenner's theory (1992) therefore focuses on the complexities, interrelationships and interactions between the individual and the various systems.

The ecosystemic ideologies are significant, as they link the mental growth of a person to the environment and recognise the effect of the environment on human behaviour (Visser, 2007). This leads to a better understanding of the student by taking into account the student's interaction with the lecture room, college and the broader shared schemes.

The environmental model is therefore important, as it acknowledges the effect of shared situations on the growth of individuals. It can therefore serve as a guideline to predict behaviour and to mediate and deal with individuals (Bronfenbrenner as quoted in Simbeni, 2008).

Policies regulating student non-attendance to decide if it is line with the ecosystem theory approach in dealing with student non-attendance, should first start with the country's Constitution (RSA, 1996a). To understand the problem of absenteeism, the

causes should not be dealt with in isolation. Various environmental factors influence student behaviour.

#### **2.4.2. The bioecological model**

Bronfenbrenner (1998) reviewed the Bioecological Model based on the ecological and bioecological theories. This model is similar to the previous one, with the focus on the development processes. The environment of the individual is important, because their interactions shape their human development. When the relations occur timeously, they are more effective (Swart & Pettipher, 2005). Personal attributes are emphasised, as they play a role in the person's interactions. The biological person's attributes are vital in the model because they influence the immediate procedure, hence the new name, the bioecological model (Swart & Pettipher, 2005).

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory is regarded as suitable for this research study, as it considers the development of the adolescent in the context and the time they live in. The literature contends that students require student support especially because of the age of students when they join the TVET environment.

Bronfenbrenner (2005) maintained that personal improvement is a transitional process, which comes in various stages. The model focuses on personal attributes. Bronfenbrenner identified personal attributes such as violence, aggression and insecurity that can influence a person's development. Swart and Pettipher (2005) stated that these attributes could also impact the relations among microsystems.

These attributes in students could pose as obstacles to teaching and learning, resulting in absenteeism. Simbeni (2008) stated that it is important to consider that personal factors, socioeconomic factors and college factors are not the only causes of student absenteeism. It is also not only the individual characteristics, family, peer or college factors that contribute to non-attendance, but the relationships among these that could lead to untimely college dropout. For instance, the changes occurring in adolescence may result in a change in behaviour, which poses a threat to lecturers. It has been agreed that students cannot be separated from their

environment; they are part of and can be influenced by the conditions in the environment.

## 2.5. FRAMEWORK OF CONCEPTS USED TO CONCEPTUALISE THE FOCUS OF THE STUDY.

The systematic theory was as well employed to explore the challenge of student non-attendance in the TVET colleges. Systems theory was used to determine issues and give direction on a plan of action. After identifying the problem, it will be easier for management to deal with the problem in a better way. Colleges are social or open systems in which they cooperate with other systems. The following is the framework of concepts that was used to conceptualise the focus of the study, using systems theory:

### 2.5.1. The college environment influence student behaviour in TVET college.

Different situations influence student behaviour in colleges. Situations such as unpleasant classroom environment may influence student not to attend classes regularly. Lecturers are to create friendly classroom atmosphere to minimise student absenteeism. The lecture room dynamics which are a provider to student achievement are inside a learning organisation mechanism (Tinto 2012:4). Lecturers with thorough understanding in subject matter, appropriate lecture planning, and this will help to change student behaviour of non-attendance. According to Vink and Adejumo (2015:2-3) support that TVET lecturers need coaching in classroom administration with a picture to preserve students engaged. Furthermore Smit and Rossouw (2015:73) maintained that lecturers who are not appropriately organised and lack subject content tend to encounter student misconduct of absenteeism more often than ready, capable lecturers.

A mixture of the said approaches entails stimulating lessons full of activities that involve students to participate, become interested in not missing lessons and have a feeling of completely being recognised in their learning environment. Best intervention of teaching, Pienaar (2011:159), maintained that good teaching is merely feasible if a lecture room atmosphere is only of care and friendliness and only

in which great anticipations exist. Distinct established policies, control, inspiration, and the formation of detailed and inspired view all add to a kind, compassionate environment Though in most institutions, lecture rooms are arranged in the same way, Pienaar (2011:160) is of the opinion that, the environment in one lecture room might be caring and welcoming, however the other one might be stressing and intimidating that will led student not to attend regularly.

#### 2.5.1.1. Overcrowding of classes

The high rate of student's growth in College and class size is a problem challenging TVET Colleges .Lecturers are facing challenges of overcrowded classes in which student take advantage of it and decided not to attend. Vink and Adejumo (2015:3) echoed that lecturers encounter challenges of a lack of discipline when dealing with huge groups of students. According to Wedekind (2016:19-22) also supported that overcrowded lectures offer poorly controlled students especially in absenteeism.

Shortage of facilities such as lecture rooms might lead to overcrowded lecture rooms. Vink and Adejumo (2015:3), in their study consume that overcrowded lecture rooms offer wrongdoers with a chance to misbehave without being held. Additionally, lecturers without enough room to teach may force students having ample time to idle during lecture time can lead to laziness or absenteeism.

#### 2.5.1.2. College students as young adults and adolescents

The college students are usually young adults and adolescents. At this stage, protective factors are critical, as students are at a developmental level. Vink and Adejumo (2015:4) pointed out that such students are not effectively ready for the amount of work anticipating them. At the end the situation led to student absenteeism. Roffey (2008:31) referred to the college as a microsystem characterised by connectedness, trust and the quality of relationships. The college is also seen as an organisation.



### **2.5.2. DHET Public Further Education and Training college attendance and punctuality policy**

College attendance policy, Public Further Education and Training College Attendance and Punctuality Policy (2013:1), provide guidelines on college attendance. Even though the standard of the guiding principles might differ, it is useful to have guiding principles for student attendance. Current procedures might be long and extremely extensive, and several college policies deal with student attendance. The Public Further Education and Training College Attendance and Punctuality Policy (2013:1) the DHET envisage that TVET Colleges are to impose high altitudes of student turnout and punctuality

College attendance procedures will remain inadequate until colleges start using the guiding principles to reduce student non-attendance. The policies address the rapid growth in absenteeism without explaining what student attendance entails. The purpose of attendance and punctuality policies are the following: stated in the Public Further Education and Training College Attendance and Punctuality Policy (2013:1),

- To set a standard for student attendance
- To make students aware of the importance of regular attendance and to emphasise that students are responsible for their attendance
- To adequately observe attendance and punctuality
- To ensure that students are rewarded for regular attendance, to have policies in place, and to effectively monitor absenteeism
- To ensure a high academic quality.

Furthermore stated that increased levels of turnout and punctuality, not solely develop students' opportunities of achieving, however it as well groom them for the specialised principles at the place of work, Public Further Education and Training College Attendance and Punctuality Policy (2013:1) According to Public Further Education and Training College Attendance and Punctuality Policy (2013) again clarifies the route to keep. At TVET College student presence obtains high urgency.

The DHET acknowledges the link between lecture attendance and the students' performance. Lecturers must keep registers and report absenteeism to the office. Registers are an essential tool to record absenteeism. It is also a formal record of student presence and non-attendance. The lecturers must ensure that the attendance registers are signed by the students present in the lecture room. Lecturers and students may not sign on behalf of other students'.

It should be regarded as an offence if students leave the lecture room early or stay at home without permission. Students who regularly stay away from lectures may become involved in unauthorised activities that will lead to unauthorised non-attendance. When a student's absence is authorised, the lecturer will regard it as a valid absence. Failure of students to attend lectures without permission is regarded as a transgression, and these students will be reported to the college authorities. The student will be disciplined according to the policy requirements. The Public Further Education and Training College Attendance and Punctuality Policy (2013:4) stated that "no more than three warnings should be issued for absenteeism during stage one before moving on to stage two. During stage two a formal review should be held to investigate students' on-going absenteeism with the academic manager and a disciplinary warning should be issued where appropriate." The policy furthermore stated that no more than two reviews should be held before moving on to the third and final phase. Should a student reach below 80% attendance rate despite warnings and absence reviews, it is expected of the academic manager to have a formal hearing with such students (Public Further Education and Training College Attendance and Punctuality Policy, 2013:5).

The policies of all the colleges are not the same, and all colleges therefore do not follow the same standards and principles. Policies on student attendance should be clear and students should know what is expected of them. Policies should also play a role in instilling self-discipline in students. Railsback (2004) is of the opinion that policies must be in place to serve as motivation for students to attend college regularly. Policies should not take the form of "zero-tolerance" disciplinary policies.

The most important objective of a successful attendance policy should be to correct the behaviour of the students that persist in staying absent, and not to punish them. According to some studies policies in respect of student attendance are in place, but students still do not attend lectures as they do not understand the policies. Monobe and Baloyi (2012) maintain that if the policies cannot be interpreted, it will not be implemented.

#### **2.5.2.1. Compulsory attendance by the student**

Once the students are registered, they must attend lectures and it is expected of them to be in class. The regulations managing absence can be imposed only on a student. The policy on student presence defines a student as any individual who is given education or compelled to get education according to the Act (DBE, RSA, 2010, Definitions).

Students are expected to attend 80% of the lectures per subject. The policy states that if students fail to do this, they will not be permitted to write the examination in the subject for which they have not attained at least 80% attendance. Memorandum (46 of 2016) emphasise that students at TVET Colleges will solely be permitted admission to the national exams if their turnout is above 80%, and their ICASS, or term mark, is above the specified pass percentage for a subject. Policy provided by DHET strictly regulates student attendance and requires 80% attendance from TVET students.

#### **2.5.3. The lecturer-learner relationship**

The relationship should be based on interpersonal interaction. The relationship a lecturer has with the student will influence the student's behaviour and could determine the academic success of a student. Good interaction between lecturers and students and a stable feedback system will intensify teaching.

##### **2.5.3.1. Positive student-lecturer relationships**

Students are likely to attend when they have good relationship with their lecturers. According to Thomas (2012:12), students that do not think leaving college emerge to have an improved perception of the college procedures and are further probable to have confident relationships with their lecturers and other students' Best intervention

of studying conferring to Pienaar (2011:159), is solely likely if lecture room's atmosphere is solitary of provision, openness and solely in which great prospects endure.

#### 2.5.4. Communication

Communication will influence the climate of a class environment, which may have an influence on student absenteeism. According to Pienaar (2011:161), lecturers ought to clearly communicate encouraging prospects to students, furthermore offer positive detailed response on their attempts. That will motivate student to attend lectures.. Suitable admiration and infrequent rewards inspire students. Lecturers ought to have a concerned viewpoint and students ought to recognise that lecturers have their curiosities at heart. Making a sincere, caring lecture room atmosphere thus prevents student wrongdoing of not attending and inspires coherence. According to Oosthuizen (2016:28-29), the invention of harmonious environment, calmness and wellbeing in the lecture room, is paramount explained as more safe and secured.

Communication is beneficial for all organisational stakeholders, and it is core in building shared reality and a system of meanings. Effective communication takes place if there is a good relationship across all levels in the organisation. Communication forms an integral part of organisational systems and the smooth operation of an organisation. Through communication students will be able to understand what is expected from them particularly in lecture rooms. Creating lecture rules may as well minimise the challenge of absenteeism in lecture rooms. This was supported by Oosthuizen (2016:154-155) pointing out that class rules assist students to know what is required of them, and what is contemplated intolerable conduct. Student active participation in putting class rules provide them a feeling of ownership and improves their acknowledgement of the rules

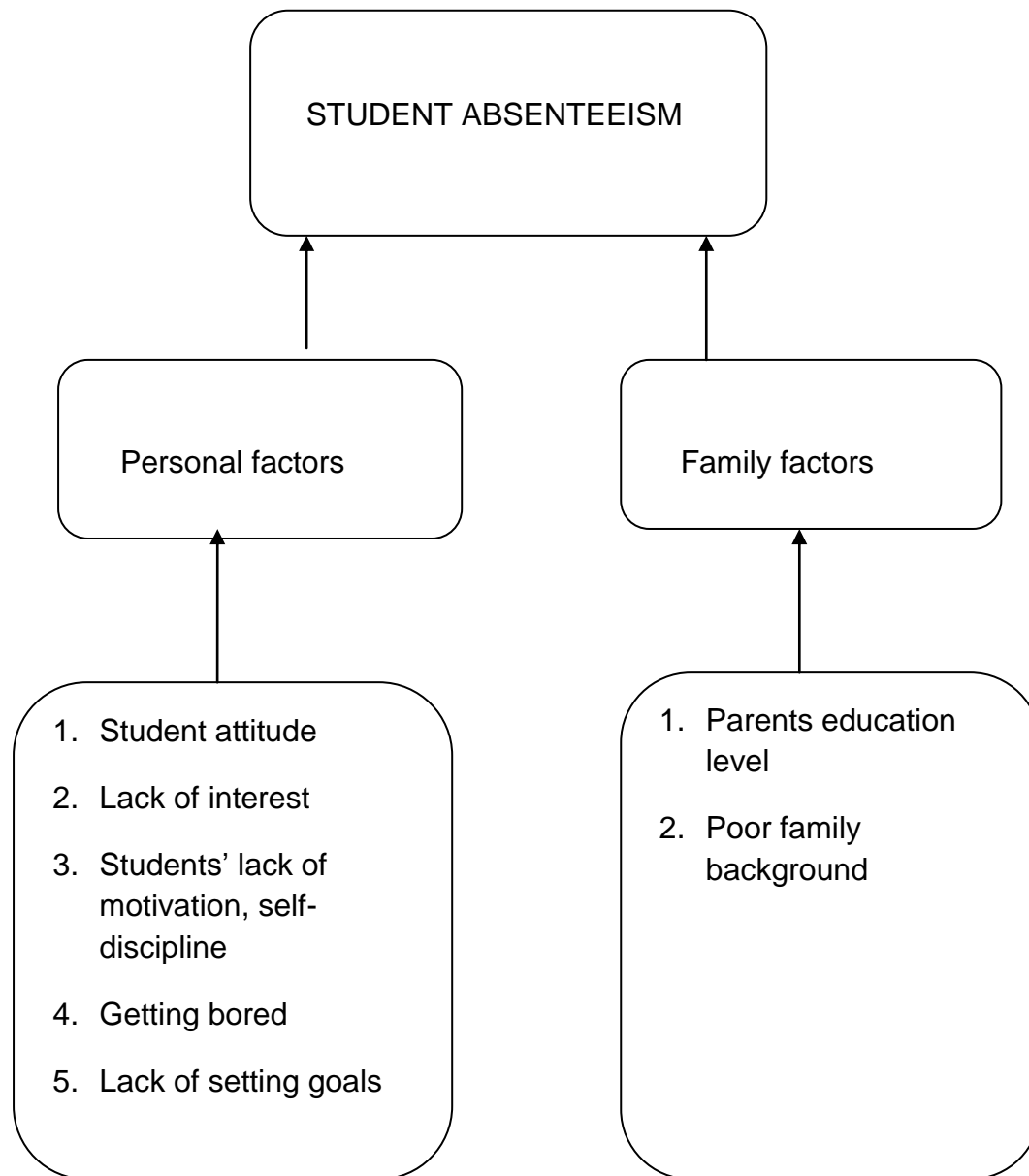
## **2.6 CAUSES OF ABSENCE**

Non-attendance in TVET colleges can be due to various reasons. The students in TVET colleges are adolescents as well as mature students. Kearney (2008) explains that students' personal factors such as drugs and excessive drinking, ill-health, socioeconomic factors such as poverty, family matters such as parents' divorcing, and college-based factors contribute to student non-attendance. Zafar (2005:72) indicated that non-attendance may be attributed to factors such as teenage pregnancy, unemployment and poverty. Teenage pregnancy, for example, account for long- and short-term student dropout (Buchel, 2006:11).

Bonzos (2005) said that adolescent students in most poverty-stricken families often look after their siblings and have to take them to school. Wadesango and Machingambi (2011) discovered in their study that students' reasons for non-attendance are socioeconomic in nature where students are forced to look for odd jobs or part-time jobs to supplement the family income. Gustafsson (2011:23) further stressed that, due to burden on families, many students tend to be absent from college in hunt of income making chances.

Various studies, such as the study by Pelhivan (2006) found that boredom, lack of interest in college subjects, peer pressure and lack of goal-setting are common factors contributing to student non-attendance. Also, the parents' level of education is a key factor affecting student attendance (Henry, 2007). Researchers such as Gokyer (2012) and Kottasz (2005) maintain that student' views on education and motivation with regard to learning is an important factor in student non-attendance. Kottasz (2005) discovered that students with a low motivation level do not attend college as often as students with a high motivation level. A lack of motivation has an impact on student attendance. In this regard, a significant difference was found in student attendance between motivated and unmotivated students in college (Kottasz, 2005)

Table 2.6.1: Factors causing student absenteeism



Various studies on student absenteeism are conducted, but not much is known about student absenteeism in TVET colleges. Several studies have been conducted on the reasons for and effects of student non-attendance in overseas countries. Previous studies have shown that non-attendance is linked to personal factors (McCoach & Siegle, 2003). Studies show that students who have a negative perception of their academic studies and negative feelings towards the lecturers as

well as a low level of enthusiasm had a very high rate of non-attendance. Personal factors are therefore a predictor of non-attendance.

Students frequently encounter a number of obstacles that can affect their interest in and their ability to go to college (Halbrunn, 2007). These diverse challenges are known as factors relating to the family. Previous studies have revealed a connection between student non-attendance and the schooling of parents (Henry, 2007) and the socioeconomic position of the family (Ingul, Klöckner, Silverman & Nordahl, 2012). The premise is therefore that a family issue is a predictor of non-attendance.

## **2.7 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO STUDENT ABSENTEEISM**

The causes of student non-attendance could therefore be attributed to three factors, namely personal matters, socioeconomic factors and college-based issues.

### **2.7.1. Student personal issues contributing to student absenteeism**

Student attendance can be affected by personal issues of students (Department of Education, 2005:8). Personal factors may cause students to lose interest in attending college, and as a result their academic performance may drop. Student truancy can also be attributed to college-based factors, for instance early parenting, poor performance and repeating subjects, peer pressure, poor family background and inability to form good relationships.

Student truancy is also linked to college-based factors, for instance scarce college resources, the student-lecturer relationship, unstimulating environment and student monotony. The college student population consists of students with different individual attributes, capabilities, knowledge, interests, aims and opportunities. With regard to their personal abilities and attributes, some students may be especially vulnerable to non-attendance.

Budlender (2006) said that apart from individual attributes, ill-health may be a key reason for non-attendance of college. However, some students may occasionally fake illness as an excuse not to attend college. Kearney (2008) says that the age of students can also be a factor in student non-attendance. Kearney (2008) further

stated that when frequent student attendance is not recognised or appreciated, it may be demotivating to students who always attend college.

Another reason for non-attendance could be peer pressure. Students could be influenced by peers to get involved with gangs and to act and behave negatively at college (Reid, 2005). It becomes difficult when students participate in undesirable and unwelcome antagonistic behaviour (Kearney, 2008). Non-attendance may occur because of students' lack of commitment and their defiant attitude.

Non-attendance can furthermore be linked with sexual promiscuity and substance abuse which could ultimately lead to the students dropping out (Teasley, 2004). Teasley (2004) noted that once students engage in alcohol and substance abuse they could end up hooked on or obsessed with it, which could affect their future wellbeing. DeSocio (2007) also said that the habit of substance abuse may give rise to students engaging in unprotected sex, which could increase the risk of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

There are also different perspectives regarding the influences of student non-attendance. According to Sefa, Mazzuca, Mclsaac and Zine (1997) some lecturers regard the family as a significant factor in student non-attendance. Once students do not have the support of their families, they could lose interest in attending college. It is challenging for a single-parent household to offer essential support to students. Most lecturers feel that a lack of discipline and respect for the organisation influences student non-attendance. Interestingly, the students agree with this.

#### **2.7.1.1. Teenage pregnancy**

Teenage pregnancy is very likely closely connected to college absenteeism. According to Spaul (2015:37) stated that teenage pregnancy is a threat influence and is one other factor contributing to absenteeism. Pregnancy and its associated challenges often lead to non-attendance by female students (Kearney 2008:451). The non-attendance may be temporary or long term and can often cause students to permanently drop out of college. In TVET colleges, DHET policy does not reject pregnant students from attending at college. The colleges aids pregnant students and appreciated young mothers back, the problem that arises such as household,



breastfeeding and more childcare duties and loss of studying time amongst other issues poses a challenge and led to absenteeism (Mnguni, 2014:32).

The pregnancy rate of teenagers mostly between 15 and 18 in South Africa is increasing; most of these students are in Grade 9 or 10. TVET colleges register students from 15 to 18 years of age for NC(V) programmes. In this regard, studies confirmed that 32% of South African teenagers already have children at the age of 18 (Karra & Lee, 2012).

Teenage pregnancy could have several negative consequences for students, such as isolation from peers, low performance at college and student absenteeism. Non-attendance is further exacerbated by visits to the antenatal clinic and postnatal clinic. This is especially very difficult for teenagers particularly in the initial stages of the pregnancy (Mpanza, 2012) and the birth period (Gyan, 2013).

#### **2.7.1.2. Substance abuse**

Lecturers at TVET colleges often encounter students engaging in substance abuse, such as drugs. In most cases these students do not attend their classes regularly.

#### **2.7.1.3. HIV/AIDS**

The effects of HIV/AIDS on student performance and actual coaching and training cannot be overlooked. HIV contributes to non-attendance of individuals. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS on the education process and its effect on college presence has been established.

#### **2.7.1.4. Peer pressure**

At TVET colleges peer pressure prevail. Mnguni (2014) stressed that adverse peer effect prevail, as they have remained to do mainly in deprived urban societies in South Africa. Peer pressure is also an important influence on non-attendance, as students are often manipulated or influenced by their friends to stay absent. The need for the student to fit in with his or her friends might bring about pressure and nervousness for the student, which might affect his or her presence at the college (Dieltiens & Meny-Gilbert, 2008:48).

Peer pressure has been mentioned by numerous researchers such as Sharma (2005) as an important factor that leads to anti-school conduct such as non-attendance and absence.

#### **2.7.1.5. Non-cognitive abilities and adolescent developmental stages**

Non-cognitive abilities and adolescent development issues are vital in student turnout. Students who do not attend regularly miss out on opportunities to acquire non-cognitive abilities that could make college attendance more comfortable and worthwhile. A very low absenteeism rate of students might hamper their development as adolescents, as they miss out on associating with peers, who form a vital part in the development as adolescents. An integral part of the development of adolescents is their association with peers, and if they stay absent frequently, they miss out on socialising with peers.

Non-cognitive abilities or characteristics are outlined as “habits of mind, matter for students long-term success” (Rosen, Glennie, Dalton, Lennon & Bozick, 2010:1).

If students do not attend college regularly, it might be an indication that they do not possess non-cognitive characteristics like determination, enthusiasm or self-regulation which are important to achieve success in colleges. Lipnevich and Rogers (2012) revealed that students’ thoughts and self-belief practices stimulate their conduct and intellectual achievement.

## **2.8. SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS**

The socioeconomic setting in which students develop is an essential exosystemic analysis of their general welfare. It is argued that their wellbeing, learning, occupation and future aspirations are mostly dependent on the socioeconomic position of their families (McWhirter et al., 2007:31). This rhymes good through Wadesango & Machingambi (2011) reports which discovered that; students understanding of non- attendance that has a socioeconomic nature which prepares them to look for casual employment. Balfanz & Byrnes (2013) complements that; there is a rising proofs of even young adolescents captivating on senior upkeep tasks in solitary parent, multi-generational families.

Socioeconomic issues influence student attendance. Poverty is a phenomenon that is difficult to describe and assess. However, poverty is a powerful predictor of educational achievement and there is a link between poverty and non-attendance. Non-attendance is especially common in extremely poor societies. Hugo (2011:47) argued that numerous students with socially and financially deprived upbringings lack effective character examples, social communication abilities and admiration for their mentors. Hugo (2011) further stated that People financially deprived, additionally frequently lack nutritious foodstuff, medical attention, sufficient outfits and services for example electricity and enough hygiene.

Hugo (2011:47), as well mentioned that deprived of appropriate food and people of good character, students discover it challenging to concentrate in class. Moreover, students from deprived societies frequently have to struggle with illegal elements and mob brutality in their communities (Hugo, 2011:47).

Other socioeconomic causes for student non-attendance are teenage pregnancy, household tasks and transport problems. Fragmented family structures and an unstable family situation could cause student non-attendance. Another common difficulty that leads to student non-attendance is the lack of transport (UNESCO, 2009). A shortage of transport and unreliable transport is also a challenge which could lead to an increase in non-attendance, which could eventually lead to student

dropout. The SAHRC (2006:49) pointed out that the high cost of transport is a financial worry in most families.

Chang and Romero (2008) stated that students from low-earning families are likely to miss classes because of transport problems, ill-health and the fact that they did not participate in early childhood development. Ready (2010:272) emphasised the link between low socioeconomic status and student non-attendance by affirming that children living in poverty are 25% more likely to miss three or more days of college per month.

Maynard et al. (2012) believe there are different reasons for student absence and that the youth in the colleges are very diverse. Households of little socio-economic class, particularly those with constrained social money, in informally and physically side-line places and where important family associates are not working, are frequently absent (De Witte Cabus, Thyssen, Groot, Brink,.2013:10).Some students come from child-headed families and might rely very strongly on what society and the college have to offer (Robson & Kanyantta, 2007). The Nelson Mandela Foundation Research Report (2005) suggests that South African students are not attending classes, as their parents want them to work and provide food for their families.

A shortage of student accommodation is also a factor that influences student attendance. Some students are also not able to enrol at colleges due to bad weather conditions, such as an unfavourable climate, too much rain, frost or too much warmth. Furthermore, some students are starving and therefore do not participate in class activities.

When students stay absent for too many days, it becomes a problem. It is a fact that when absenteeism increases, students may eventually drop out. If student non-attendance is regarded as normal and allowed to continue, it becomes a problem for both the student and the college.

Learning can be described as the construction of a framework consisting of ideas. Student non-attendance causes students to miss out on sections of the learning framework, as they are not at college.

### **2.8.1. Poverty**

Poverty in South Africa is usually the outcome of a history of power relationships which has deprived specific groups in the community. Ready, (2010) claimed that there is a powerful connection among poverty and student non-attendance. Additionally, Metzger, Fowler, Anderson & Lindsay, (2015) further stated that students staying in poverty have uncertainty in their homes and thus tend to be in between college and home. South Africa's history of unfairness, cruelty and abandonment of the needs of many people has been the cause of the dire economic conditions of a large sector of society. Poverty is therefore not only associated with income, but has an influence on the lifestyle and the shared educational and political lives of people and their societies.

Poverty thus has an impact on people's personalities and motivation and certainly shows in all aspects of a person's life. Poverty can be seen in people's inability to provide food for their families, crowded living conditions, shortage of employment opportunities, low wages, lack of job protection, absent fathers and children living away from home (Visser, 2007). Students not attending classes may have negative consequences, which in turn will end in more poverty.

Masitsa (2006) suggested that individuals living in poverty often lack proper nutrition and healthcare. This may lead to physical deprivation and low energy levels in students, which might influence their attendance at college negatively. Studies in South Africa showed that many child-headed families are dysfunctional. When teenagers head families, they have many household responsibilities and also experience many difficulties at home. They may feel overwhelmed as a result, which affects their focus on their learning and ultimately their attendance at college. When the students have odd jobs or work on a part-time basis, it may lead to non-attendance.

Students seek employment, as they require additional income to supplement the money (bursaries) that they receive from the state. The income or money that they receive from the state is not sufficient for their needs, which may force them to stay absent from college. This impacts teaching and learning, as the circumstances are beyond the students' control.

### **2.8.2. Transport**

The high rate of absenteeism tends to occur in the first term where students claim that they do not have money for transport. Students are inclined to stay absent to do part-time jobs because of financial stresses. Absence of transport and its undependability is a challenge which provides increase to truancy and non-attendance. SAHRC (2006:49) confirmed that transport charges were frequently a huge financial problem on parents.

The distances students travel to college also have implications for student attendance, for instance, students may not have enough money for transport.

## **2.9. COLLEGE-BASED ISSUES**

Hullinan (2008) maintains that lecturers play an important role in moulding student affection and commitment at college. Gershenson (2016) maintained that lecturer characteristics and attempts have been discovered to be related with student presence. Students, who are positive towards their lecturers and have good relationships with them, will try to attend college regularly and consequently gain intellectually (Hallinan, 2008). Students who do not have good relationships with their lecturers will stay absent more frequently (Kearney, 2008). Unexciting themes of lectures and uninteresting college subjects and programmes may also lead to student non-attendance.

Student boredom with the college and subjects can also lead to non-attendance. Further, harsh disciplinary action could be a cause of student non-attendance.

Kearney (2008) contends that when lecturers punish students without taking the consequences into account, it may further discourage them to attend the college.

Another factor could be the unhealthy lecturing habits by the lecturer and not caring enough for the students. Incompetence of lecturers has a damaging effect on the educational processes of the colleges (UNESCO, 2004, 2009b). Baatjes (2014) confirmed that TVET colleges are faced with challenges of incompetent lecturers especially in South Africa. Baatjes (2014) further stated that lecturers at TVET colleges are part of “marginalised educators” Numerous reports, such as Baatjes (2014) & HRDC (2014), established that about 60% of TVET lecturers lack proper qualifications, training and experience in occupational subjects. Furthermore, Van der Bijl (2015:2) quantified that the many of TVET lecturers have shortage of proper education experiences It has been found in certain colleges that students are inclined to stay absent from college, as they feel that they are not benefiting from the incompetence of their lecturers. Non-attendance comes about when students want to avoid certain lectures because of the perceived negative attitudes shown by some lecturers.

### **2.9.1. Unrealistic expectations and initial student support**

Cook and Rushton (2009) stated that even though non-attendance rates differ, the causes remain the same, also as a result of insufficient student support in training institutions, specifically in the first year. While much effort goes into keeping students in the learning programmes and the colleges, not much is being done to encourage students to make the correct choices before they enter the college. Authorities forget that it is a new type of student that enters the TVET colleges.

According to Tannehill (2009), TVET institutions do their best to equip the traditional students with skills. However, with the changing student population and the intake of younger and a different type of student, it is important to know their needs in order to provide them with the correct services.

Cook and Rushton (2009) suggest that organisations should make potential students aware of the changes that they will face when they enter the college, and to introduce the changes in an appropriate way. Cook and Rushton (2009:9) emphasise that the organisation must familiarise itself with knowledge of entry-level students in order to meet the students' needs and expectations, to improve student support and leadership skills and to train lecturers to teach competently.

Students, according to Papier (2009:26), find the courses challenging and they are critical of lecturers who do not prepare effectively and are incapable of explaining the subject content. According to Spaul (2015:39) pointed out that studies pointed that lecturers lack the essential subject content and educational ability to lecture the subject they are supposed to teach. Ebrahim (2013:46) stated that several students struggle socially and to adjust to college, as they need to need to form new relationships, take responsibility for their education and adapt to the college system.

Most students report challenges with regard to academics and the workload immediately. Ebrahim (2013) says that to help students discover and use their potential and abilities, the learning organisations must help the students to accept the philosophy of the organisation, to acquire knowledge on their own and with the help of their fellow students.

### **2.9.2. College atmosphere and connectedness**

The college atmosphere is an important factor in college attendance. College atmosphere refers to a student's feeling of connectedness to the college and the support given to students in terms of the academic, social and other needs. Constructive classroom management, involvement in extracurricular activities and the acceptance of disciplinary processes all have a bearing on college atmosphere and connectedness.

College atmosphere is associated with college turnout. Class and class size, which can contribute to college atmosphere, are inversely connected to college turnout.



Boredom and an insufficient college atmosphere are important motives for college absenteeism or dropout.

### **2.9.3. Students' social structure**

Students whose social structure is in contrast with that of the higher learning organisations may have a sense that they do not fit in, that their social and cultural exercises are improper and that their unspoken information is underestimated. These students may therefore consider giving up on their studies (Thomas, 2012:13).

Students need to have a feeling of belonging and engagement. A feeling of belonging may refer to shared intellectual engagement (Thomas, 2012). From a student's perspective, belonging may refer to the students' personal feelings of membership or connectedness to the organisation. Thomas (2012:13) stated that when students' feelings of a sense of belonging could promote student retention and achievement.

### **2.9.4. Student support on the campuses**

Student support should be an integral part of an institution like a TVET college. According to the White Paper for Post School and Training (PSET) the opportunity of a student prospering academically is multiplied once there is complete student provision from a college. Student support should be extended across the different college campuses. TVET college students, whether at college by preference or communal condition, need support (Ebrahim, 2013) The college staff on all campuses should work together to render effective student support. This support takes different procedures, comprising of career guidance and provision in choosing the accurate courses A student support officer on the campus should work together with the academic and administrative staff in the department to support students effectively.

Each employee's responsibility in terms of student support should be explained, and all employees should have clarity about their role. Regrettably, this is in most instances not the case, and as a result employees do not know exactly what their responsibilities are in terms of student support. In this instance ample study is required on the influence of SSS and academic growth programmes on student results in the TVET College background (Hendricks, 2011). Employees are often uncertain on how to do the work, about their specific roles, and their performance assessment standards.

### **2.9.5. Inappropriate placement**

According to the White Paper (2013) the DHET's vision for public TVET colleges is the optimal development of vocational skills for artisans and other occupations such as engineering and construction, tourism and hospitality, and business and management studies.

A programme offered by TVET colleges is the National Certificate (Vocational) (NCV). It is aimed at adolescents, 14 to 15 years of age, who passed Grade 9. It is also a pathway to employment. However, TVET colleges also accept, and even motivate, students who completed their National Senior Certificate (NCS) at school. However, these students who obtained a National Senior Certificate find it difficult to be in the same class with students who only passed Grade 9. These students may find this demotivating, which may inevitably lead to non-attendance.

The study shows that more than 50% of students who register in TVET colleges passed Grade 12. The NC(V) therefore has one of two roles. It is (1) a vocationally-oriented qualification to the NCS (matric) for students who passed Grade 9, and (2) a post-secondary qualification. This poses a challenge for lecturers who have to deal with students from different educational levels in the same classes.

Many students are very disappointed, as they had passed the fundamentals at high school only to find out that they have to repeat them in the college (White Paper, 2013). The student regard this as a waste of time and opt to stay away or bunk

classes, as they don't see the value of repeating what they already know and become bored.

It is not easy for students from Grade 9 to meet the requirements of the NC(V) curriculum. The standards are regarded as extremely high by the students as they are obligated to pass with 50% in all core subjects. Gewer (2013) stated that pre-Grade 12's usually strive to cope with the requirements of the curriculum.

TVET colleges now have the responsibility to bridge the gap between the school and demands of the challenging TVET curriculum. Many students fail or do not attend the college. Unsuitable placement of students is a key challenge which is linked to student non-attendance. Most students do not cope with the high standard of the curriculum in TVET colleges. Students do not cope with the high expectations the college is expecting from them and they end up staying away from the college.

## **2.10. EFFECTS OF STUDENT ABSENTEEISM**

Regular attendance of college is an important element in the performance and achievement of students. Student non-attendance may influence all aspects of the college setting. Students who do not attend frequently may end up dropping out from the college and may face the risk of being stuck in poverty.

Students may also get involved in dangerous criminal activities. This affects the justice procedure negatively, as it is very expensive to uphold conviction (Bonzos, 2005:21). Attendance does not only influence individual students, but the learning atmosphere of the entire college.

Non-attendance negatively affects the lecturer's ability to plan and present lessons in a rational and planned way. Student non-attendance does not only influence the absent student, but also other students, lecturers and overall classroom management. Other students might be affected when the lecturer has to interrupt the learning of other students by trying to contact students who do not attend regularly (Chang & Romero, 2008).

This causes constant interruptions and possible failure of students. Balfanz & Byrnes, (2013) supported that the time students miss lectures, they are not only impacting on teaching and learning, they as well drop behind intellectually, influence their peers intellectual skills and jeopardise affecting their lecturers opinions of them.

Non-attendance could have several negative effects on the future of students. Chronic truancy, or unexcused absence, is also a predictor of negative outcomes in adolescence, such as failure, college dropout, substance abuse, gang membership and criminal actions (McCluskey, Bynum & Putchin, 2004:214).

Non-attendance also has negative outcomes for students and the college. Students who do not attend classes regularly do not have enough time to learn the material that allows them to prosper at a later stage in college. TVET colleges award students bursaries, and if students do not attend regularly, they will forfeit the chance to obtain funding. The provision of funding depends partly on the number of days students attend or the mandatory percentage of attendance according to the TVET college policy.

Society is also influenced by the possible escalation of criminal action, low unemployment rate and a shortage of social facilities (Maynard, Mills, Butt & Harwood, 2012) Good performance is when the person meets the standards set by themselves or by others. Even though various personal and educational issues impact students' performance, the outcomes of non-attendance remain an issue of debate.

Low performance is signified by a low student Grade Point Average (GPA), minimal class contribution and little GPA coordination between students. Students' involvement is interrupted as a result of non-attendance. Non-attendance leads to the fact that students cannot contribute freely to the class and do not feel free to ask questions about topics that they find confusing. Students who do not attend classes regularly also do not participate in small group conversations in class.

Non-attendance causes students not to realise the value of the knowledge that they can benefit from in class. These students do not work well with their lecturers, their friends and within their groups. In fact, these students impede the performance of students in their groups and classes when they have to work jointly on group assignments and projects. Low performances in examinations are indicated by a low GPA, and as a result the students have to repeat or leave the college. Non-attendance leads to challenges in performance. When the student is not in class, he or she will not have the opportunity to study new systems.

Piggott and Kelly (2011) stated that the long-term effects of inadequate college turnout and absence are higher college dropout rates, a high unemployment rate, and higher funding charges of imprisonments, as there is a greater probability of dropouts being arrested and imprisoned for criminal actions and conduct. Kane (2006) further suggested that students who do not attend college are more likely to be jobless in future compared to their peers who attend college regularly and acquire a qualification.

Also, when students stay away from college, they don't have any guarantee that they will be safe, and put themselves at risk of being harmed while they are not at college. Truants have a predisposition to becoming involved in socially undesirable and unlawful actions. Truant students miss out on being educated in life skills, and may become sexually active at a young age, which could cause them to have unprotected sex and thus stand at risk of HIV (Kearney, 2008:455).

## **2.11. POSSIBLE STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING STUDENT NON-ATTENDANCE**

The TVET colleges have tried many approaches to curb the problem of student absenteeism. The approach used is to reduce the rate of student non-attendance and encourage students to perform well in class. Weideman, Goga, Lopez, Mayet, Macun and Barry (2007) stated that participation in sports, awarding students, recognising good attendance and community involvement are the strategies used to limit student absenteeism.

Different authors such as Kearney (2008) argued that to control student absenteeism, a disciplinary model could be employed. To manage student absenteeism the focus should be on the general factors that contribute to the problem of non-attendance. A good approach would be to use peer academic leaders (PALs) in TVET colleges. They could act as peer mentors and provide counselling to students who experience difficulties.

In this regard, good performing students are selected and trained to assist fellow students. DeSocio et al. (2007) also proposed the selection and training of mentors to deal with students who experience attendance problems. Another strategy is the forging of parent-college relationships to reduce the problem of student absenteeism. Parents who monitor their children's attendance will help and encourage students to always be at the college. The assumption behind the strategy of parent involvement is that attendance could increase if colleges encourage good relationships between parents and colleges.

## **2.12. CONCLUSION**

Crucial concepts relating to student non-attendance were clarified. The reasons and causes of student non-attendance were explained. The consequences of student non-attendance were also discussed. Non-attendance takes different forms and each person's experience should be measured against the background of different possible causes. Furthermore, the factors that influence student non-attendance were discussed. In addition, the strategies and advantages of reducing the problem of student absenteeism were explained in detail. The next chapter will elaborate on the research design and methodology.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

The research study method, design and methodology applied in this research study were discussed in this chapter. The aim was to collect suitable data that answered the research questions on how to administer student non-attendance in three TVET campuses in the Bojanala District. The purpose of the chapter was to answer the key questions and sub questions established in chapter one.

This chapter also dealt with the purposes of qualitative reasoning and the attributes of a qualitative study (Cele, 2008:42). The study adopted a qualitative study design as a concept in researching student non-attendance in the chosen TVET colleges specifically in the Bojanala District in the North West Province. By taking the views of Leedy and Ormrod (2005) into account, it seems that the qualitative method was appropriate for this research study as it endeavoured to investigate an occurrence in its usual (natural) location, with the focus on a holistic view of the social occurrence.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) contend that a qualitative study usually answers questions concerning natural experiences to explain and understand the participant's experiences. In qualitative research the study setting was explored in detail to get a complete view of the details and why and how the participants in the specific environment understand them.

The qualitative method assisted the researcher in acquiring more information on the opinions and insights of participants about the difficulties, causes and effects of student non-attendance. In this chapter, the research began with the assumptions, worldviews and the use of a theoretical lens in order to explore the lived experiences of the relevant students.

The qualitative method was considered suitable for this research study, as the researcher aimed to get an understanding of the knowledge of the lecturers concerning the management of student non-attendance in TVET colleges in the Bojanala District. This qualitative study was not only allowed the researcher to investigate the experiences related to student non-attendance, but it provided information on how to manage student non-attendance in the colleges.

Handling the issue of student non-attendance might differ from one campus to another or from one lecturer to the next on the same campus. In embarking on this study, the researcher wanted to broaden her understanding of the challenges related to student absenteeism. Lecturers experience challenges in the strategies that could be used to decrease non-attendance.

In this chapter, the researcher defined the research project and provided reasons for selecting this design. Data gathering strategies like semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation was used. The researcher outlined how data was presented, examined and motivated. The data was examined through the inductive narrative method.

When presenting and analysing the information, the researcher showed that the information was authentic and trustworthy and provided reasons for this contention. The researcher adhered to the ethical considerations to protect participants and ensure their wellbeing.

The researcher requested permission from the education authorities of the college to perform this research. When permission was granted, the research started with the investigation. When the researcher requested consent to conduct the research, she provided reasons for the study.

### **3.2. RESEARCH PARADIGM**

This research study was situated within an interpretive paradigm which considers the involvement of persons as the key source for understanding the realism of a phenomenon. The ontological perspective of an interpretive investigator was to have different realities and perceptions from the participants with regard to the phenomenon under study (Wahyuni, 2012). By means of the interpretive model the researcher attempted to create sense of the importance of the participants' world by speaking to the participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Therefore, this approach allowed the researcher to interpret the understanding, opinions and views of the participants in their personal situation and cultural setting.



This approach allowed the researcher to understand, draw rational assumptions and analyse the participants from a personal perspective. Thus, in this research the researcher assumed that several certainties exist, and clarified the perception, opinions and perspective of the participants' information with respect to the administration of student non-attendance in the TVET College in the Bojanala District.

The excellence of a research paradigm was focused on the aim of the research study and the origin of the experience to be learned (Silverman, 2013). The researcher trusted that several certainties and understandings of the topic under study could be gathered. Wahyuni (2012) stated that the realism of the experience was controlled by the insight, view and knowledge of the participant. When conducting this study, the researcher's objective was to determine the feelings and opinions of the participant by speaking to them throughout the semi-structured interviews (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). An interpretive paradigm assisted the researcher to gain an understanding of the administration of student non-attendance in TVET colleges.

### **3.3. RESEARCH DESIGN**

The researcher utilised the case study method. A case study method is an orderly way of producing and examining investigation data. Cohen, Manion and Morison (2007) stated that the case study was a limited method and the situations were learned within a precise timeframe and study setting. The researcher wished to offer a rich explanation of the study setting to offer the reader a chance to determine the applicability of the study.

This research study focused on student non-attendance in TVET colleges in the Bojanala District. The experiences of participants concerning the administration of student non-attendance on three campuses were examined to provide information on how the phenomenon of student non-attendance was approached. Creswell (2009) stated that the case study method allowed an in-depth inquiry of the views and activities of participants about student non-attendance. The information gathered

from various campuses was consolidated and linked, followed by a presentation on the findings (Wahyuni, 2012).

### **3.4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology included the choice of the study location, sampling, data collection methods and data analysis (Merriam, 2009).

#### **3.4.1. Research site**

The interpretive study was performed on three TVET campuses in the Bojanala District in the North West Province. The TVET College chosen for this research was Urban- rural College consisting of three campuses situated in different areas of Bojanala District. The distance among the campuses may have given rise in variations in the attributes of the students and lecturers. The criterion used for choosing site that the researcher looked into the location of the three campuses, the other campus was situated in the urban area, the other one in semi-urban area and the last one in semi-rural area. These three campuses were purposefully selected from other TVET colleges in the North West.. All three campuses were then asked to take part in the research. The aim for involving all three campuses in the research was to offer an impartial indication of the views of students and lecturers regarding the origin of the causes of student absenteeism at the TVET College. Merriam (2009) said that an interpretive study used a little test or quiet time to permit the researcher to concentrate carefully on important matters in the research.

The key focus of the research was to explore the issues influencing student non-attendance at TVET colleges and the administration thereof.

#### **3.4.2. Sampling and population**

Sampling referred to the method of choosing the participants as subjects of the research (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011). A sample of six lecturers (two per campus) was selected from a population of lecturers on all three campuses and a sample of 12 students, of which four per campus was selected. Students were chosen equally from all class levels. The researcher took into consideration that student genders

were different and they were going same education daytime. Students who turn out to be continually absent were purposefully chosen for interviews. The participants were both males and females. Therefore, the total number of the participants under study was 18.

Purposive sampling was used to choose the participants for this research (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011) as participants with valuable, comprehensive and exclusive experience and knowledge of the topic under review (Cohen, Marion & Morrison, 2008). The researcher employed purposive sampling to acquire the type of information necessary for this research. It allowed the researcher to choose participants that can provide valuable, rich information and explanations of their experience on the topic under review (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

The participants in the study were selected on the basis of their potential to give valuable information and facts about the phenomenon under study. The researcher does not expect to generalise the findings, as the small sample size was not necessarily representative of the broader population of students or people who experienced the phenomenon (Cohen, Manion & Marrison, 2010).

The researcher also used purposive sampling to select knowledgeable participants who stayed absent frequently or with in-depth knowledge about repeated non-attendance. The chosen lecturers were those accountable for students' attendance. It is believed that these lecturers can offer valuable information on the administration of student non-attendance. Another criterion was that the sample comprised lecturers with at least three years' lecturing experience. The reason for choosing experienced lecturers was because they may have more experience about the phenomenon of non-attendance than newly appointed lecturers.

The researcher requested the assistance of the campus managers to choose or recommend lecturers who best suited the research criteria for purposive sampling. The researcher then requested permission from the campus manager to make contact with the lecturers and to notify them about the research. The consent letters were given to the lecturers in person, and later returned to the researcher. Individual

appointments were made for semi-structured interviews after college hours at the preferred venues of the individual students or participants.

Three campuses were chosen after the researcher has received information on the rate of student non-attendance for each of the campuses. The chosen campuses were within the radius of 67 to 101 km from one another, and their actual names were withheld for ethical reasons. The researcher named the three selected campuses as Campus A, Campus B and Campus C.

### **3.4.3. Data collection technique**

For this specific research qualitative data were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with participants. The interviews would take the form of a semi-structured interview individually with each participant at their campus.

Corbin and Strauss (2007:213) further stated that the data could be gathered in a natural setting, and for this reason the participants were interviewed in their homes or at the campuses. The researcher adopted the stance of non-participant observer to obtain a full understanding of non-attendance (Strike, 2006:57-73). As part of the data collection strategy the researcher used semi-structured interviews with structured and open-ended questions.

### **3.4.4. Semi-structured interviews**

Data was collected through individual semi-structured interviews. Rubin and Rubin (2007) described an interview as a process between two or more persons who exchange a few words, discuss and settle on a specific point based on numerous consented questions. Semi-structured interviews have pre-determined questions; however, during the interview the order and wording of the questions can change or improve. More questions could be added as the interview progresses.

During individual semi-structured interviews, it became easy for the lecturer participants to share their experiences and their understanding on how they administer or control a lecture room to reduce student non-attendance in the college. Open-ended questions were prepared, based on the data obtained from the

literature review, the prepared study questions and the aim and purpose of the study (Burton, Brundrett & Jones, 2008).

During interviews, the researcher recorded the interview in full; the audio tape was used for reference purposes and note taking. The interview schedule was regarded as very important, as essential questions were specified in the schedule. This assisted the researcher not to omit vital information or questions during the interview. The interview schedule consisted of various open-ended questions in which the researcher needed to gain more detailed information.

The benefit of using semi-structured interviews was the fact that they were flexible and they allowed the interviewer to control the questions that were asked. The researcher was also able to ask the participants about their perspectives, opinions and views on issues, their basis for achievement and the motivation thereof (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). In addition, the interviewer encouraged the participant to offer further detailed and completed information.

The weaknesses of semi-structured interviews included the fact that participants sometimes provided personal and prejudiced responses because of their desire to please the interviewer. Semi-structured interviews may also be time-consuming, demanding and very costly. Moreover, the participants may be discontented with the interviews and unwilling to share their real or factual opinions and views.

Semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to spoke about their experiences, to communicate and interpret their own experiences (Cohen, Manion & Morison, 2007). The interviews were conducted at the campuses after college hours. If need be, the interviews were conducted at the participants' homes if they were not present at the scheduled time. Interviews, however, were time-consuming. The transcribing and analysis of the interviews took a very long time. The estimated time for the interviews was between 30 and 40 minutes for each participant.

### **3.4.5. Non-participant observation**

Through observation the researcher strived to investigate and understand how student non-attendance manifested itself particularly in the TVET colleges. Observation was a highly rated and valuable research method. The main purpose of observation was to get a better understanding of the setting in which student absenteeism occurred. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:145-146) suggested the following guidelines to enable the researcher to control and do observation:

- The researcher must take field notes and use a notebook to record observations and interpretations.
- The researcher must remain neutral and retain the records of his or her interpretation of what were observed and heard. The researcher should guard against confusing real observation with clarification.

The researcher explained her role as a non-participant observer, which helped in eliciting information from truant student participants. The researcher also chose the place in which to observe the student attendance behaviour. Furthermore, she ensured the following when conducting a qualitative observation, as advocated by McMillan and Schumacher (2010:350):

- The researcher to be familiar with the situation.
- The researcher classified in detail the aspects of observation.

The use of non-participative methods helped the researcher to explore the situation in order to get worthwhile information on the following:

- Important information on student absenteeism

### **3.5. RESEARCH PROCEDURE**

The researcher was planning to spend at least one week at each research site. The participants were informed about the study. Prior to the interviews the participants were given consent letters to read and sign if they agree to participate. The purpose and the significance of the study were explained to the participants to reassure the participants and to obtain their consent.

### **3.6. RECORDING OF DATA**

The researcher intended to use a recorder to digitally record the information obtained from the interviews. The recordings were useful in the transcription of the information obtained during the interviews. The handwritten and observational notes were obtained from the interviews.

### **3.7. DATA ANALYSIS**

The research study clearly drew and spelled out a firm process which was employed in the next chapter. A great amount of data was obtained through qualitative data collection that needs to be arranged into themes and subthemes (Kurma, 2011). In this instance a content analysis approach was used to make sense of the rich information. Content analysis entailed gaining an understanding of the information to form an impression by coding, classifying, writing and presenting the information into associated themes (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004:138)

Creswell (2007:43) pointed out that the researcher devised a method on how to make sense of the information. The descriptive, observational notes and the transcription of the digital recordings of the interview were reviewed or analysed. The data were studied through a critical lens because the researcher seeks to understand the lived experiences of student non-attendance. Creswell (2009:218) recommends that researchers analyse the information in such a way to highlight the codes in which the researchers want to organise the knowledge. The preliminary processing of information included transcribing the audio recordings, cleaning the information by deleting all the data that led to identifying the participants and the

places where the information was collected, and employing codes to distinguish the participants and the institutions included in the research (Wahyuni, 2012).

Data analysis in this study involved determining social models and themes. The researcher used the following processes and guidelines to examine and combine the information:

- Arrange information through prior classification together with an interview guide and study questions.
- Arrange information into feasible units.
- Ensure that the topic is rooted in the research questions. Use index cards to organise meaningful points.
- Arrange information in suitable categories to make sense of the data.

The research questions and the aims of the study were used as guidelines to analyse the information gained from the study (Wahyuni, 2012). In addition, the researcher analysed the information meticulously by examining the participants' answers to each question.

### **3.8. TRUSTWORTHINESS**

The trustworthiness was realised by a common understanding between the participants and the researcher. Mertler and Charles (2011:199) explain trustworthiness as the correctness and authenticity of the information. The researcher attempts to achieve credibility, dependability, conformability and transferability. Thus, trustworthiness was achieved by ensuring the credibility and dependability of qualitative information. Credibility was achieved by ensuring that the outcomes of the research study were believable or convincing from the participants' point of view.

Qualitative research emphasises the application of diverse methods to increase trustworthiness (Creswell, 2009). The data from diverse participants was organised in themes and subthemes. In this research, the selection of lecturers from diverse campuses ensured fairness of the research. Information about classroom administration in respect of student non-attendance was obtained.



To guarantee trustworthiness a tape recorder was used to capture the precise information, which was transcribed verbatim. A trust relationship was also being established with the participants. The researcher reassured participants that their answers remained confidential.

The interview transcripts and the data analysis table were shared with the participants to verify the correctness of the information. It also helped to reduce instances of inappropriate information capturing and interpretation and it offered findings that are reliable and unique (Creswell, 2007). Moreover, when participants check the data, it allowed the researcher an opportunity to authenticate the correctness of the findings, which added to the credibility of the research (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

### **3.9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

In this research study, the researcher first seek permission to start conducting the research by completing a 2019 research ethics application form for ethics review and clearance from Unisa's College of Education. After ethical clearance has been issued, the researcher seeks permission from the selected TVET colleges in the Bojanala District in the North West Province. Once permission was granted, the researcher further seeks permission from the participants of the chosen TVET campuses in the Bojanala District, North West Province to conduct research at their respective campuses.

Furthermore, the researcher handed invitation letters to the selected TVET college campuses in the Bojanala District to encourage them to participate in the interviews. The researcher delivered the application and invitation letters to the individual participants and informed the lecturer participants about the interviews.

The researcher explained to all the participants the significance of the study, the procedure, timeframe of the study, and the informed consent. She waited for the responses from all the selected campuses. In addition, the researcher prepared a letter of informed consent which was read and signed by each participant in the

research study. Because students participated in the study were students who frequently stayed absent, it was possible that the student may be absent at the time of the interview. For this reason the researcher conducted the interviews in their homes if need be.

The issue of ethics was more focused on the moral assumptions of the research. To comply with the ethical assumptions significant to this research study, an application letter was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee at the University of South Africa. An Ethical Clearance Certificate from the University of South Africa was obtained from the Ethical Committee before the researcher commenced with the research.

In this study, the researcher issued a letter of informed consent to participants to inform them of the research. Johnson and Christensen (2008) mentioned that informed consent is when participants agreed to participate in the research after they were informed of the aims, processes, risks, advantages and privacy relating to the research. The participants were assured of their right to confidentiality during the study (Welman, Kruger & Mitchel , 2005:24).

The following ethical issues were considered in the study (Cohen et al., 2005):

- Safeguarding from being harmed
- Informed consent
- Right to confidentiality
- Honesty during the study.

Participation in this research was voluntary and participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the research study at any time they wished. Participants were also free to stay anonymous in order to protect their identity. Furthermore, the researcher established a trust relationship with the participants before started with the interviews.

The researcher prevented participants from being betrayed. Betrayal often transpired in the research study or the subsequent findings and recommendations were made known in such a manner as to cause humiliation, anxiety and distress to the participant. The researcher considered this as one of the greatest ethical considerations. In addition, the researcher was dishonest by failing to reveal to the participants that they were being investigated; this was equated to espionage.

Welman et.al (2005:182) advocated that as part of being ethical, the researcher demonstrated the moral code of conduct to the study. The researcher disclosed her identity as well as the background, purpose and the procedure of the study. Furthermore, the research was as straightforward and to the point as possible. All outcomes as agreed to were honoured. Moreover, the dignity, privacy and interest of the participants were respected. In addition, the participants were provided an opportunity to check or verify the data. In this regard, the information was readily available for checking by the participants.

### **3.10. CONCLUSION**

The research approach, design and methodology were outlined in this chapter. The reasons for selecting a qualitative approach as the exploratory research design were explained. The sampling and data collection methods were also specified. In addition, the trustworthiness of the data and ethical considerations were described in this chapter. Chapter 4 will deal with the collection and analysis of the data.

## **CHAPTER 4: COLLECTION OF DATA AND ANALYSIS**

### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter comprises the discussion of the research design used to explore the research question as well as the findings of the interviews of lecturers and students from three campuses in the Bojanala District. The documents used for curbing the absenteeism problem are discussed in this chapter. The results and the interpretation thereof are also provided. Furthermore, the findings are analysed and discussed.

The main aim of this chapter is to answer the following questions:

- What are the perceived personal factors of students?
- How is student absenteeism managed in TVET colleges?

In order to answer these questions, the researcher used interviews to gather information. The researcher visited three campuses in the Bojanala District to interview the participants. Rich and adequate information were provided by the lecturer participants. However, not all student participants gave enough information, but most provided a substantial amount of information about the problem of absenteeism.

The information in this research is presented qualitatively as was clearly shown in Chapter 3. Not much information or studies on TVET college student absenteeism is provided in the literature.

Strategies for TVET college lecturers on how to deal with and to manage student absenteeism were not enough. The focus of this study is therefore to explore experiences on the high student absenteeism rate.

The intended purpose of the study is to make lecturers aware of and to understand the challenges and the reasons why certain students experience an attendance problem at the TVET colleges. The experiences of lecturers and students with regard to student absenteeism will be discussed in this chapter. In addition, the biographical

information will be presented in this section and information gained from collecting data will be categorised into main themes and subthemes.

#### **4.2. BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF PARTICIPANTS**

The total number of participants in the study was 18. Of the 18 participants, six were lecturers and 12 were student participants with an absenteeism problem from different campuses. The biographical information about the participants is presented in the table below.

Table 4.2.1: Biographical information of lecturer participants

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Teaching experience</b>	<b>College</b>
Lecturer A	Male	5 years	Campus A
Lecturer B	Female	6 years	Campus A
Lecturer C	Male	6 years	Campus B
Lecturer D	Female	8 years	Campus B
Lecturer E	Female	13 years	Campus C
Lecturer F	Male	11 years	Campus C

Table 4 2.2: Biographical information of student participants

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>NQF Level</b>	<b>College and age</b>
Student A	Male	NQF Level 4	Campus A: 25 years
Student B	Female	NQF Level 4	Campus A: 23 years
Student C	Female	NQF Level 4	Campus A: 23 years
Student D	Male	NQF Level 3	Campus A: 25 years
Student E	Female	NQF Level 4	Campus B: 32 years
Student F	Female	NQF Level 4	Campus B: 22 years
Student G	Male	NQF Level 4	Campus B: 24 years
Student H	Female	NQF Level 4	Campus B: 24 years
Student I	Female	NQF Level 3	Campus C: 22 years
Student J	Male	NQF Level 3	Campus C: 23 years
Student K	Female	NQF Level 2	Campus C: 26 years
Student L	Female	NQF Level 4	Campus C: 23 years

Table 4.2.2 shows that more females than males were interviewed, as female students are more frequently absent than males on the three campuses. All the participants were comfortable to be interviewed in English. The names of the participants were not mentioned during the interviews, and the alphabet letters, namely A, B, C and so on were used to refer to them. The names of the campuses were also not divulged, and alphabet letters were used to identify the campus (Campus A, B and C).

### 4.3. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section deals with the challenges encountered by students interviewed for the study. After gathering information through the interviews, the researcher reviewed the observational notes and recordings of the interviews. The findings from the interview will be presented in themes and furthermore categorised into subthemes. The researcher preferred to use priori coding from the literature during analysis of data gained from the participants. There were no emerging themes, all the themes were previously indicated on chapter two and data is presented from the previous known information

The three themes presented in Chapter 2 will be presented and categorised into subthemes.

Table 4.3.1: Themes and subthemes of findings

Themes	Subthemes
Personal factors of the students	Attitude towards lecturers Lack of interest in the subject Peer pressure Menstruation period pains affecting attendance Lack of responsibility, self-discipline and motivation
College-based factors	Late coming Lecturer attitude towards students Incompetent lecturers Timetable clashes Attendance registers

Socioeconomic factors	Disowned by parents  Student pregnancies  Poor family background  Lack of transport money  Family matters
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#### 4.4. THEME 1: PERSONAL FACTORS OF STUDENTS

##### 4.4.1. Attitude towards lecturers

On the three campuses that were used to conduct the interviews, the lecturers confirmed the negative attitude of students towards lecturers as a factor contributing to absenteeism. See the following statements by a lecturer:

Lecturer C: *“Students tend to compete with lecturers especially female students and develop negative attitudes towards lecturers.”*

Lecturer C: *“Students are choosy when coming to lecturers; students choose lectures they want to attend.”*

##### 4.4.2. Lack of interest in the subject

The subject content can lead to students getting bored which contribute to the problem of non-attendance. A lack of interest in the subject by student could lead to absenteeism. Smit and Rossouw (2015:74) pointed out that boring lectures can be the outcome of inadequately skilled lecturers who is not skilled enough to teach the subject.

Lecturer B: *“Students lose interest in the subject because students are wrongly placed in their different programmes. Some do not qualify to be in that programmes. I can give you an example of civil engineering, or engineering as a whole. Students do not cope because of Mathematics and the medium of instruction is English, which is a second language to them. So it becomes difficult for them to execute some of*



*the tasks. The failure rate increases and they ended up losing interest and decided not to attend anymore.”*

*Student E: “I am bunking classes of a lecturer X because I don’t like his subject. The subject is boring and is too difficult to study. So why should I attend? I know I am not going to pass.”*

*Lecturer C: “Ma’am, to my observation, since I have done HR (Human Resources) we did Psychology and all stuff and personality testing. I think our CAP test is not relevant. It is just a camouflage instrument, so now the student’s personality and curriculum or the subject is not clicking to them. The reason for me to say students drop out sometimes or are absent from class, is because they lack interest in the subject. The CAP test was not able to scrutinise the complexity and capabilities of this person, hence because she is not interested. It’s just because she gets NSFAS or is maybe bored at home. Sometimes at some stage she keeps on changing courses. Absenteeism is because that student is not interested in the subject; it is just a mismatch; she got bored and there is no reason to go to the class.”*

*Lecturer D: “I think it is in terms of our structure. Too many periods a day is very long. I don’t think a student should attend a subject four times a week. There should be learning time, consultation time and administration time, so they tend to see you a lot. They get bored and I would say again it could be them, or it could be me as a lecturer being very mean because we are not the same. Mmm, and it could be them not wanting to do whatever their school-related issues are. Contact time, I think, should change from basic to higher, because some students would say to me ‘Ma’am’. I still feel they don’t mature the same as others who are very ready for the highest institution of learning. They would say to me ‘We feel as though I am still in high school. When I thought I am now going to tertiary ‘cause I am guarded all the time. I have to sign the register all the time, I am being shielded all the time as though I am like a child and I am grown up’. So responsibility has to come within them. I am not going to guard grown-up children; for that matter I tell her that passing or failing is your choice. I will assist, but for you to sit down and study is your choice; you know what you want. I cannot push you in an angle or direction that you feel you*

*do not want. You have go to school to register for your own reasons; the same when you study.”*

#### **4.4.3 Peer pressure**

Some lecturers acknowledge that peer pressure is a contributing factor to student absenteeism. The findings revealed that students are influenced by others, and students influence one another because they lack interest in what they are doing in college. Students tend to participate in unhealthy activities because they are pressurised by others. See the following:

*Student F: “My attendance is very bad because sometimes I do attend and sometimes I don’t. Err...77% of the time I attend and 30%, I mean 25%, I don’t attend. The reason, on my side, is peer pressure. Sometimes I take the baby to the doctor and to the clinic, but most of the time it is peer pressure.”*

#### **4.4.4. Menstruation periods affecting attendance**

Students are not motivated to attend during their menstrual periods. Menstruation is seen as one of the personal factors causing student absenteeism. Lecturers often complain about students not attending because of menstruation period pains. According to Budlender (2006) students are always absent because of illness. Even if the illness is not serious, they still do not attend.

*Lecturer F: “Students do not attend for the entire day because of menstruation pains.”*

*Student I: “Hey, Ma’am, you don’t feel the pain I am experiencing during menstruation. There is no way I can attend class.”*

#### **4.4.5. Lack of responsibility, self-discipline and motivation**

Lecturers on all three campuses lecturers confirmed that the students do not take full responsibility for their studies Students are also not disciplined in their studies, not serious, and do not even have passion in what they are studying. One lecturer said

that students are as mature as one would assume, as compared to NATED students (Report 191). These students still need to be coached and monitored.

Most students register because they heard about NSFAS (National Student Financial Aid Scheme). Once these students are registered, lecturers must go after students to beg them to submit their tasks and assignments, even though the consequences of not submitting have been explained to them. Students stay home until the lecturer takes the initiative to call them, urging them to submit their tasks, but some students still do not cooperate. The participants responded as follows:

Lecturer A: *“About 2% of our students just stay away without any reason.”*

Lecturer C: *“I personally think that our students are not motivated enough to be at the college, because they did not get what they were expecting. They don’t know why they are here because some were just told about bursary money but do not have a passion for studying.”*

#### **4.5. THEME 2: COLLEGE-BASED FACTORS**

The college-based factors in the study are the factors in the college environment that cause the high absenteeism rate in students. College lecturers play a leading role in building students’ interest and involvement in college. Hallinan (2008) says that if lecturers monitor the students, respect them, give rewards and show appreciation, this will motivate students to attend college. In most cases, when students become aware that lecturers are not paying attention to their attendance, they start to relax and do not attend regularly.

All three campuses are affected by these factors. The following factors that contribute greatly to student absenteeism were identified from the students’ responses in the interviews:

#### 4.5.1. Late coming

According to the DHET Public Further Education and Training College Attendance and Punctuality policy late coming of students influences their studies and progress. In this study, most students struggle with the problem of late coming.

Students are unable to attend morning classes which commence at 07:30. About seven of the 12 students interviewed indicated that they are unable to attend morning classes or first periods because they oversleep and fail to catch the early transport. When students were asked at what time they go to bed, most said that they go to bed at 21:00. The following were the responses:

Student D: *"10:00 pm."*

Student C: *"I usually sleep around 23:00."*

Student B: *"I sleep at 22:00 pm."*

Students were also asked at what time they leave home to go to college. Their responses were as follows:

Student B: *"7am"*. When student B was also asked if he uses transport to get to college, the student responded: *"Yes, I use transport to get to college."*

The students were further asked if they could estimate the time it takes for them to get to college. They responded as follows: Student B: *"Two hours depending on how long the taxi takes to get full."*

Student C: *"Time to get to the college is  $\pm$ 30 to 45 minutes depending on the condition of the taxi, as some are not in good condition."*

Students were further asked if they manage to attend first periods as well as the reasons for not attending the first period. They responded as follows:

Student C: *"No, I am unable to attend the first periods because the first periods commence at 07:30 am and it is difficult to get transport. As I stay in the village, I have to wait for a long time before I get a taxi. I would leave my place at 06:00 but it is not safe due to crime around our area and I do not have anyone to accompany me during that time."*

Insufficient community transport method influences late coming and non-attendance.

Student F: *“When I realise that it is already 8, even if I am around the campus I do not go to class because I know the lecturer is going to chase me away.”*

Student G: *“When I am late by 15 minutes, you will find that the lecturer has already closed the register and I know he is going to refuse to let us sign, so I decide not to come at all because it is still the same.”*

It is evident that the students go to bed on time and thus there is no valid reason why they are not attending morning classes. The problem could be that some of the students are lazy to wake up and take things for granted.

Lecturer participants on Campus A stated that no common practices or procedures are in place for the handling of late coming. However, the DHET Public Further Education and Training College Attendance and Punctuality policy states that if students arrive 10 minutes after classes commence, it should be recorded as late with an “L” in the register, and it should be followed up after the class. In some departments the lecturers’ seniors design templates to control late coming. However, the lecturers do not always use these templates as it takes some of their quality teaching time away. As a result, no one is following up on late coming even if reported. It is to the lecturer’s discretion on how to deal with late coming. The lecturers from Campus B and C mentioned that they talk to students verbally about late coming as long as they are in class. See the following response:

Lecturer D: *“In case of the location of the campus, students come from far and you will find that there is no transport. Students have to rely on bus tickets because they do not have money for taxis. Sometimes the buses do not fetch them for 2 to 3 days, and sometimes the bus breaks down and students have to wait for another one.”*

There is no policy in TVET colleges that regulate the marking of the register when students are late for class, and as a result lecturers do not do anything about students coming late. Sometimes students come late at will because they know that no action would be taken against them. Lecturers are therefore left with no alternative but to go to the HOD if they want to discipline a student. This could result in some HODs judging the lecturer as incompetent.

Lecturers therefore do not know what to do in class, how to manage the class and to discipline students. Lecturers are therefore left with no option but to leave everything, and just complete the registers and forward everything to the seniors to deal with the problem of absenteeism.

#### **4.5.2. Lecturer attitude towards students**

Non-conducive relationships between students and lecturers are a factor influencing student non-attendance. The study found that students from all the campuses participating in the research complained about the negative attitude of lecturers towards students. The study also revealed that many students left the college because of the negative attitude of lecturers. One student out of the 12, however, said that some lecturers are friendly towards students, and as a result, students always attend their classes and enjoy being in their classes. The following student holds the opposite view:

Student C: *“Lecturer X has a problem with me because he always passes nasty comments and always makes fun of me. So I decided not to attend his class anymore.”*

Kearney (2008) and Reid (2005) stated that unhealthy relationships between lecturers and students may influence student absenteeism. When students fail the subject of a particular lecturer, it could be on account of the attitude of the lecturer towards the students. In such instances participants confirmed that they lost interest in the subject and decided to stay absent for that particular subject. See the following:

Student L: *“Lecturer B has no patience with students. She is always rude and aggressive; she can’t even listen to us.”*

Lindstandt (2005) mentioned that students who feel that lecturers do not give them attention or respect them are more likely not to attend college. Students who have healthy relationships with lecturers therefore attend regularly and become successful academically (Hallinan, 2008).

### 4.5.3. Incompetent lecturers

The perceived incompetence of lecturers contributes to student absenteeism. If lecturers do not understand the subject content and are unable to teach the subject content, it may lead to unhealthy relationships between students and lecturers. Some lecturers are committed, hardworking and passionate about their work, while others have a low morale, are incompetent, do not spend enough time with students, and may not even be skilled in the TVET curriculum. When lecturers are perceived to be incompetent or unenthusiastic, students may decide not to attend some of their lectures. According to Rostamzadeh (2013), stated that research informed many students trusted that lecturer's mastery on the matter and influence of communication are the significant motives for student attendance. Four student participants out of 12 were of the view that some of the subjects are boring, and they therefore decided not to attend anymore.

Student C: *"Lecturer X always reads the textbook to us, word for word. So why should I attend the class because I already know that he is going to read the textbook."*

Student J: *"I do not see the reason for attending lecturer B's class, because he always comes to class not prepared. We even help him; he is always confused and cannot answer students' questions."*

The study found that the teaching style of lecturers is also a contributing factor to student non-attendance. The researcher as a lecturer at a TVET college also observed that students expect lecturer D to present a lesson in exactly the same way as lecturer B. Lecturers on the different campuses do encourage and follow best practice, but their approach and teaching style will differ, even when compared to the teaching style of lecturers from other institutions. Students have a habit of comparing lecturers, which may ultimately lead to the students developing a negative attitude towards certain lecturers. In due course the student will stop attending classes. The most vital element in the growing attendance of students in lecture room, is the lecturer attributes like teaching, confirmed (Lipscomb & Snelling, 2010).

#### **4.5.4. Timetable clashes**

The study found that the way the timetable is drawn up on Campus A may add to the problem of absenteeism. Also, most participants interviewed were the repeaters, and they were identified as students with a high absenteeism rate in some of their subjects. Furthermore, the study revealed that most of the repeaters dropped out because of confusion experienced as a result of the timetable. The timetable does not allow repeaters time to attend the classes of the subjects they are repeating as it only makes provision for the new academic subjects. Herbert (2005:72) continued to state that it is significant, for the College Board to admire the timetable and retain conducts inside stated time in command to guarantee an organised, planned studying environment.

Student A: *"I am always absent for subject X as my subjects clash. I decided to attend subject B because it is new to me."*

Student I: *"The timetable does not accommodate us repeaters."*

It was also found that Campus A uses an internal document for subject clashes. When a student's periods clash, the lecturer of the class he or she decides to attend, must sign on the form designed for this purpose that he or she has attended the particular period, while the other period that he or she has missed because of the clash, is marked as absent with "R"(reason). However, even though it is marked correctly with "R", it will affect the student's attendance percentage.

#### **4.5.5. Mismanagement of attendance registers by the lecturers**

The study explored the systems of attendance record keeping in three campuses. It was found that all three campuses use attendance registers to keep record of presence and non-attendance. The study also found that in TVET colleges, lecturers use registers differently from those that are used in schools. Lecturers are provided with an ITS (Information Technology System) list in which individual students sign to confirm their presence. The study revealed that lecturers acknowledge that the control of registers has loopholes. See the following responses:



Lecturer B: *“Our students are very naughty; students sign for absent students and they sign for their absent friends.”*

Student G: *“I am always absent with some of my friends, but the next day when you check, the friend has signed and mine is marked absent. I wonder how the registers are controlled.”*

The study revealed that it is difficult for lecturers to control and manage registers while teaching. Registers are used as the only instrument to control the attendance of students.

Lecturer D: *“It is difficult for lecturers to control registers effectively, as we are overloaded with work and I will find that the time is not on my side and the other group is waiting outside to come in. There is no time allocated for administration work.”*

Lecturers acknowledge that policies and instruments for controlling absenteeism are in place. See the following responses:

Lecturer C: *“I am afraid to say nothing much has been done when it comes to student absenteeism. The principle of 80% attendance is that a student who does not meet the requirements of attendance would not qualify for the examination. As TVET lecturers we are not sure that it is still applicable. It is also going to be a challenge to implement it, because, to be honest, no lecturer can say his or her register is authentic.”*

Student K: *“I do not know how the government is going to determine my attendance, as sometimes lecturers do not give us registers to sign; they only give it to us to sign when it is needed.”*

The study further found that students on Campus A and Campus B confirmed that they do not attend classes on Fridays. On such days the lecturers give the students the registers to sign and allow students to leave without doing anything in class.

Student E: *“I do not attend on Fridays because the lecturer told us there is no school on Fridays. I do not come to college at all because I am saving my transport money.”*

Student F: *"It is very difficult to attend especially on Fridays. I usually don't come to school because it's something that I made up in my mind that there is no school on Fridays on our campus."*

The following student had a totally different view:

Student L: *"You know, Ma'am, the first time when I came to register here, I never thought that I was going to be treated like as if I am still in high school. I did not realise that a register is also used here, because I was thinking that TVET colleges are higher education institutions where students have an opportunity to be independent. It is the same – there is no difference; we still have to attend too many periods a day with long theory and long periods. It is honestly boring and lecturers are very strict."*

#### **4.5.6. Lecturer experiences regarding student absenteeism**

The study revealed that all the lecturers who participated in the study experience the problem of student absenteeism. The lecturers said that the problem of high absenteeism is mainly among senior students, which poses a very serious problem to lecturers and student performance.

Lecturer A: *"Our entry-level students are disciplined and attend regularly, but senior students, especially our exit-level students (level 4), have a very high absenteeism rate. Another trend is that it is 99% of the time always the same students whose attendance is poor. Most of the time, if a student has a low attendance at entry level, they keep the 'habit' until the exit level."*

Lecturer D: *"Well ehbm, it is a problem that we are experiencing for quite a while. It does happen, but one just has to come up with a way of keeping the programme. It is their problem, I mean, to put a stop to, because if it continues, you won't be able to teach, and our students won't be able to learn because you will keep on going back so that those who were absent will come to par with where you are at the moment."*

Lecturer F: *"I am not sure how to answer, but we do. I do, let me have to say, have a challenge with students that are not attending. With me, now it is supposed to be the*

*student's responsibility to either attend or not to, because I feel that when I guard them or control their attendance at the same time, I am not teaching them responsibility, because they have to be responsible for their own studies and their own performance. From where I am at, I cannot be telling these women and men how to, you know, behave academically. It's not like you know. I am at primary school or high school where they still need proper governance, but nowhere. It's maybe higher institutions of learning or highest to somewhere else, you get me, but you cannot. You are grown. Once you are grown, once you are 21 and above, you have to learn to be responsible. If some people are getting married at 15, 18, why don't you grow up and take action?"*

The study further revealed the following unique factor contributing to student absenteeism, which has not been found in the literature:

Lecturer F: *"Our students are carrying a lot on their shoulders. They have to deal with many things and they are going through a lot, of which sometimes as lecturers we do not have time to sit with our students and understand their problem. Yes, not all students are open to us but some are, and you can feel that our students are going through hard times."*

#### **4.5.7. Lecturer management and challenges of absenteeism in the classroom**

Lecturers who participated in the study confirmed that absenteeism is really a problem when it comes to teaching and learning. The study found that lecturers and students mentioned financial reasons on several occasions as a challenge for students to attend.

Lecturer A: *"The main challenge is when a student indicates he or she is absent due to financial reasons. To determine the legitimacy of it is very difficult, because some students use this as an excuse to get out of trouble."*

When students are not in class, it will affect teaching and learning. Lecturers will be forced to repeat what has already been done. Students will miss some tasks which will lead to the student not coping and dropping out from the college. This poses a

serious challenge to the lecturers because they do not achieve their goals as planned.

In this regard, the researcher would like to emphasise that when lecturers reteach the work to students who have stayed absent, it wastes the time of those students who attend regularly. This does not leave a good impression to students who never stay absent, which is a very serious challenge to lecturers. By repeating the lessons, it seems that lecturers are also supporting the problem of absenteeism.

Lecturer participants confirmed the challenge of students not adhering to the classroom rules and the college code of conduct. It is the researcher's opinion that lecturers are these days not able to take charge of their classes, as students' rights take precedence over the lecturers' needs, especially to manage and control their classes. Lecturers are not free to discipline their students because of their rights, which students, on the other hand, abuse.

#### **4.5.8. NSFAS (National Student Financial Aid Scheme) bursary**

NSFAS is the bursary used to fund students for their tuition, transport and accommodation. Lecturers and students from all three campuses who participated in the study confirmed that the NSFAS bursary also contribute to the problem of absenteeism in some way. The study revealed that usually when the colleges recruit students from outside, they promise students NSFAS bursaries, which will also cover transport money. Lecturers are therefore expecting students to attend classes as they are all funded by the bursary. However, students start by attending less regularly and when they realise that they are far behind with their lessons, they do not cope and end up dropping out. See the following in this regard:

Lecturer E: *"One of the students told me 'Ma'am, I am leaving. I cannot continue. The bursary I applied for is not paying out.' "*

Lecturer E: *"Yes some of the reasons which affect absenteeism is that of the payout of the NSFAS bursary, because, some students, if you can understand, when we recruit, we recruit them by saying the college is there to assist the neediest students,*

*and therefore they must come as they are eligible for the NSFAS bursary. The late payout of the bursary and for some not receiving it at all poses a challenge for student attendance. Some of the students are from very far, which impacts on the attendance, because we have experienced many students will be coming to say 'Ma'am I won't be coming to school tomorrow, as I don't have transport money. I am staying with my grandmother. I don't have parents; we depend on the pension grant, so I am not coming.'* ”

Failure of NSFAS to pay could be one of the factors that could contribute to student absenteeism, but another participant had the following to say:

Lecturer C: *“... so one other reason that causes students not to attend or abscond the classes, I think is the NSFAS bursary. It is one of the contributing factors because the students don't feel the pain of paying their school fees. For instance, we used to give them money – R17000. Just imagine. NSFAS is one of the contributing factors. It is actually the way they are monitoring it. They don't monitor it accurately or very well because sometimes you will find the deserving student who is always in class not getting it, but those who are always absent and not doing well get it. Why? No one can explain this except those who administer it.”*

#### **4.6. THEME 3: SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TOWARDS ABSENTEEISM**

##### **4.6.1. Students disowned by parents**

Another factor causing the problem of absenteeism in TVET colleges is failure of parents to be involved in their children's education. Three participants indicated that they are not supported by parents and that they are on their own. It is a major problem leading to the problem of absenteeism.

Lecturer E: *“Parents forget that NC(V) students are still children who still need parental guidance and supervision.”*

Some of the other lecturer participants said that parents fail to support their children and inform them about the significance of education.

#### **4.6.2. Student pregnancies**

The study revealed a high rate of teenage pregnancies in TVET colleges which contributes greatly to student absenteeism. A participant confirms the high rate of student pregnancy as follows:

Lecturer D: *"It is like students experience a period of freedom and enjoying the moment of being in another world."*

The study reveals that most absent students are females because they are not feeling well and need to attend check-ups because they are pregnant. Student pregnancy has an impact on student attendance.

Lecturer C: *"Our students often absent themselves, maybe because our campuses are situated in towns, so they explore many things and they end up indulging in sexual activities."*

Student B: *"I am afraid to come to college when I am pregnant because I am afraid the lecturers will make fun of me."*

Student H: *"I came to register at college in my early days of pregnancy, because my mom forced me to drop out of high school to come to college. My mom says that she always sees students going to college while pregnant and they are attending without any problem."*

The study revealed that pregnant students believe that it is not a problem to fall pregnant at college because you can be absent and come back after giving birth as long as you submit assignments. See the following:

Lecturer F: *"Yes, we are to deal with the cases of student pregnancies as there is no policy in place which guides us on what to do in such instances ... (sigh) ... and we are not trained nurses."*

Lecturers on two campuses, Campus A and Campus C, confirm that for the colleges to accept a pregnant student is a very serious problem, as it increases the number of possible failures because of absenteeism. The students' performance drops drastically because of absenteeism. TVET colleges need to have policies in place regarding teenage pregnancies, and these policies should give a clear indication on what to do or how to deal with absenteeism as a result of pregnancy.

#### **4.6.3. Poor family background**

The study revealed that most absent students are from poor families. Parents are not working, and some rely on odd jobs to earn money for transport. Three out of 12 students said they had to rely on their boyfriends for money. The study revealed that another cause of student absenteeism is the poor family background of students. Lecturer participants from Campus A and Campus B also confirmed that a student from a poor background is a factor contributing to poor attendance. Participants confirmed the following:

Student L: *"I came to register because the college promised us bursaries, which include money for transport."*

Student G: *"I started to encounter the problem of absenteeism after my mom and dad got divorced. My mom is not working, and my dad stopped supporting us. We survive on the grants of our two siblings."*

In terms of the study, there is a close relationship between student absenteeism and an unstable family background, which poses a very serious challenge to the attendance of students. The study further shows that most of the students are orphans who rely on the assistance of their families. One lecturer participant confirms this as follows:

Lecturer F: *"I have experienced that most students are orphans."*

#### **4.6.4. Lack of transport money**

The three campuses in the study are situated in areas where students are forced to use transport to reach their colleges. Even though one of the three campuses have students' accommodation, it does not accommodate all students. Some of the students at this campus are renting or living outside the college and using transport. A lack of transport money contributes to student absenteeism. It is a major problem and a common factor which contributes to student absenteeism and it is mentioned throughout the study by all students who participated in the study. Many students use public transport to travel from home to college daily. Public transport is a problem to students, especially as far as possible strikes are concerned. Strikes affect student attendance as they rely on the public transport. The problem of transport money was also confirmed by the lecturers who participated in the study.

Student E: *"I don't attend mainly because it's financially based. Some days I don't have money to come to college."*

The following shows that most participants often complain about the lack of transport money:

Student F: *"Financial struggle is a main problem for many students."*

Lecturer A: *"Students do not have money to travel to college and back."*

#### **4.6.5. Family matters**

Student absenteeism is also influenced by family matters, as confirmed by the following:

Lecturer A: *"Almost all our students are taking care of either a parent or a child. When they are sick or not well, they have to attend to them."*

Lecturer D: *"Some reasons are genuine. You will find our students are the heads of the families. They are maybe taking care of the elderly who is sick. Some are just absent for the fun of it; maybe it is like their first time of being on their own; they hired a place for their stay or they are even staying at the college res, so whenever they don't feel like coming to class that will be so; there are many. Some will be like those*



*who are heads of families who take care of siblings; maybe preparing them to go to school, and this makes them late.”*

#### **4.7. STRATEGIES TO REDUCE STUDENT ABSENTEEISM**

According to the findings of the study, when lecturers were asked about the strategies to reduce student absenteeism, they acknowledged that they get to the point of becoming motivational speakers as one of the strategies to inspire students to attend. When lecturers become involved in motivational talks with students, it strengthens the healthy relationships between lecturers and students. Most lecturers share their personal experiences with students as part of motivating them to attend. The strategies lecturers use to motivate or inspire their students to reduce student absenteeism are the following:

##### **4.7.1. Relating to the real situation**

It was found that most lecturers acknowledge that they always motivate and encourage students about the advantage of attending colleges especially at their age. The participants responded as follows:

Lecturer C: *“I normally use my real-life stories and that of other lecturers because they are here. They see what they have accomplished now and when lecturers relate their stories like where they started from, it becomes easy for them to believe, unlike, yes, we do go out to look for people who can come and motivate, but it becomes more believable when they hear from somebody that they see every day. The students will do introspection. When I stand in the lecturer room and say that I used to go to school barefoot without having food and stuff like that. They look at me where I am now and it becomes more believable.”*

Lecturer E: *“I am always saying to my students no one is going to fail under my leadership, meaning that those who are always in class are my people and they are the ones that are under my mentorship, then these utterances are motivating.”*

Lecturer F: *“It is just me, my character... I am kind of crazy, I am not a boss in my class; we work together. It is teaching and learning, learning and teaching. I cannot know everything; they also can't know everything. At least 70% of the content I must*

*know and the 30% must come from them, and there should always be something that you know.”*

#### **4.7.2. Encouraging students to be ready for the workplaces**

The study revealed that the TVET colleges equip and prepare students for the real workplace. The following lecturer participant confirmed that it is also part of their daily duties to encourage, motivate and prepare students for their workplaces:

*Lecturer D: “Yes, motivating students is very easy. As you know, we are preparing students for the workplace. Our college is partnering with businesses, companies, industries where they come looking for interns to give them opportunities for experience, so most probably we encourage them to prepare. We encourage them to attend, to behave well, and to conduct themselves well so that they can attract business or they can attract companies. That’s the way we encourage because we have heard about our local companies. Sometimes our local municipality will request administrators, then we will take them in. By doing this, it encourages them to say ‘If I attend well, if I behave well, if I attend class on time this will be the person to be appointed.’ ”*

#### **4.7.3. Rewards**

The study reveals that out of six lecturers interviewed, two acknowledged that giving students rewards can motivate student attendance.

*Lecturer E: “Sometimes I used to give my students rewards.”*

When asked to explain the types of rewards, a participant explained as follows:

*Lecturer C: “I used to say to my students, if you can get 95%, then I am going to take you out for lunch. But I am not doing that alone. I used to inform my HOD (Head of Department) about my actions, so that I may not be in hot water as these are students.”*

#### **4.7.4. Peer mentoring**

The findings reveal that peer mentoring takes place on all three campuses. Lecturers acknowledged that peer academic leaders help, encourage and motivate underperforming students if they struggle with subjects.

#### **4.7.5. Parent involvement**

The participants on all three campuses acknowledged the importance of involving parents in their children's attendance. The involvement of parents has a positive impact on student attendance. They further stated that the students, whose parents are actively involved, show improved attendance. The following comment of a lecturer participant on parent involvement shows their interest in working together with parents to reduce the problem of absenteeism:

*Lecturer F: "I call parents because what I have discovered is that involving parents works best. If they help us to look where their kids are and if we do communicate to parents to say 'Your child is not in class' they will quickly phone the child and you will see the very same student starting to attend. It works, and I think parent involvement is very important as well. I mean we do that quite often."*

The researcher observed that not all parents respond when needed, especially in the college where she is lecturing. Some students refuse to provide their parents' telephone numbers, or they will claim that they are staying alone or with very old grannies, or that they do not have parents. However, when lecturers investigate, they often find that the students are not telling the truth. It is part of the college's Student Support (SS) to visit the students' families to verify if the student is telling the truth or not. The view of the lecturer participants are as follows:

*Lecturer F: "We call parents, and when they do come, we discuss and we find a way forward. Normally we will make a family intervention and make a student to bind him or herself to promise to do 1, 2, 3, and if he or she does not do it, there should be repercussions of not keeping the promise as well. We hold them responsible for their own attendance."*

Lecturer B: *"I think it is now for the college to consider bringing back parents to evening meetings, for parents to track the attendance of their children. Parents should be called to see if the behaviour will stop and if it was just teenager behaviour. Then, if we call parents, we will let the parents know and ask them to do their part and assist us to ensure that the student comes to attend class. Because we do our part in class and during class time, parents must be involved in the afternoons, so together with parents the problem can be solved."*

#### **4.7.6. Lecturers as parents to students**

Lecturers confirmed that their duty was not only to teach students but to also act as parents to every student. Further, they stated that even though they do not have enough time to do their job, they still make some time to help needy students in everything they can. When lecturer participants were asked about the actions they take to assist students who frequently absent themselves, the responses were as follows:

Lecturer: C: *"Then I am going to tell you exactly what I am doing, so let me give an example of level-4 students. I created a WhatsApp group with them, meaning that I have their all contacts. Then I can even show you the communication that I use with students who are attending the class. So I used to spend my money, my airtime calling them, then I used to send them WhatsApp messages, asking them to explain the reasons for not coming to class. Sometimes I even drive to their places to check if they are well or not."*

The study revealed that lecturers sometimes have different views on certain matters. For example, the following lecturer gave a different version on the actions he or she takes to assist students who frequently stay absent from class:

Lecturer D: *"Whoa, I do not take any action. I do not take any phone call. I do not call anybody. I do not do what I would do now. I will just wait for students when they come, when they pitch. Remember, I have been with them from February already. I know their mental capacity. I would know that for this one there are reasons for you to fail. I will tell a student straight there is no need for you to fail the subject; you are*

*too good to fail, and for those I know they really 'like' I will try to assist. I should make sure you have that what you need; get 40 and go. But those that I know who in terms of performance they do actually even need your class to be there, I will make sure they don't get MQ and I use my all means, my phone, our students too, gather them, get them; that is what I do."*

#### **4.7.7. Lecturer intervention**

Most lecturers interviewed in the study have a caring relationship with their students. They communicate with students to find out their reasons for not attending class. Some lecturers indicate that they phone students, sit with them and visit student homes. The study revealed that lecturers show that they care, which may reduce the problem of absenteeism in some instances. The following extracts serve as evidence that lecturers demonstrate caring:

Lecturer E: *"Well, strategies are that we don't leave them. Like I said, I personally have to find out if that behaviour or attendance continues. I engage with students. I have to sit with the student, identify the problem and then see if I can just refer the problem."*

Lecturer E: *"Our students are teenagers of 16, 18 or 19 years. With some of them you will find that they are maybe attracted by some of the things that force them out of the way. We intervene, we sit, and we intervene."*

Lecturer F: *"We do interventions. Firstly, it will be one-on-one with the student and we have the documents that they have to sign. But it won't be signing documentation on the first contact. You will speak to them first, but if the problem persists, you now call in other lecturers as well as seniors."*

Lecturer B: *"I prefer a man-to-man conversation. I normally call them to talk. Sometimes you will find that students are burdened, so sometimes students are absent because it is too much for students to handle; some are parents."*

During the interview, the situation became emotional when one of the lecturers revealed the following emotional view:

*“... As we interact with students, you will find that some students are positive and they lack support from home. When you talk to the students he or she will tell of the sad things they went through and you need to be strong for them so that they feel that coming to college ... One student said, 'I feel I am not worthwhile'... . I have lost two students, Ma'am. They found that they are positive; they were saying coming to college does not help, I'd rather die. Yes, talking to them, some are gaining confidence, but some lose hope, but I prefer to talk to them man to man.”*

Of all the students interviewed no one indicated HIV/AIDS-related diseases as their reason for absenteeism. However, the lecturers admitted that through their observation and interaction with some of the students who were not identified as participants, most of them are HIV positive, which does affect their attendance.

#### **4.8. ANALYSIS OF DOCUMENTS COLLECTED IN THE STUDY**

In order for the researcher to gain more information on student absenteeism, lecturers provided the researcher with documents such as registers, absenteeism report templates and weekly reports on how they control student absenteeism. The researcher studied the documents to gain more information.

The researcher studied the following documents in order to gain more insight:

##### **4.8.1. Class attendance register**

A class attendance register is the most important instrument or tool for monitoring and controlling student attendance, which must be controlled effectively by the lecturer. It was found that printed class lists were used as registers on all three campuses that participated in the study. The class lists are printed without dates, and the lecturer writes the date, for which there is no space reserved, on top of the class list. The students sign in a very small column. Other student signatures overlap to the next column and it is therefore difficult for the lecturer to determine which student signed for which day. It becomes a problem for the lecturer when calculating the percentages. Every week lecturers are to submit attendance percentages for each and every group to the office of the senior.

The register shows the student number and the name of the student. It is the responsibility of each lecturer to take care of his or her class attendance register. The name of the lecturer, group name and subject appear on top of the list. Holes must be punched in the register, which must be kept safe in the file. A participant responded as follows:

Lecturer B: *"It is difficult for lecturers to control registers effectively, as we are overloaded with work ... Lecturers receive new printed lists every week. It must be punched and kept in the file. I am not teaching only one group; I have six groups and imagine having to control the register for 6 groups every week using a new register. I ended up losing some lists."*

It was found that lecturers must hand out class lists to students to sign that they are present. Lecturers must then capture the attendance on the electronic system. Lecturers on the three campuses that participated in the interview, acknowledged that an electronic system is available. However, the lecturers do not have enough time to use it and still need proper training on how to capture attendance on the system.

#### **4.8.2. Attendance report**

For all three campuses that participated in the study, the attendance register report templates were studied. According to the DHET Public Further Education and Training College Attendance and Punctuality Policy, it is the duty of all lecturers to consolidate the attendance percentage per group on a weekly basis and forward it to the senior. Reporting is common on all three campuses that participated in the study, as indicated by the following:

Lecturer B: *"Yes, as lecturers we are to submit attendance percentages every week, hence it is difficult for us to do, as we do not have enough time for admin. In that case we agreed in our unit to submit after every two weeks."*

The senior receives, check and verifies the registers, after which the senior must sign and date the registers and return it to the lecturer. The senior must then to

report the percentages to the HOD, who must complete the quarterly Monitoring and Evaluation (M and E) report template and send it to the office of the Academic Programme Coordinator (APC). The office of the APC must then send the consolidated report for the whole campus to the Data and Information (D and I) office. This office is responsible for sending the report to the DHET. The M and E report is designed to accommodate all the subjects offered in all programmes and has columns for all three campuses, that is, a column each for Campus A, Campus B and Campus C, as well as a column each for the programme, the subject, and the attendance rate per subject and level. At the bottom of the report the overall attendance per level and per campus will automatically be consolidated.

Everyone responsible for reporting should sign for their section of the report and write the date on the compliance form. Each of the campuses indicated that the procedure for absent students and follow-ups are dealt with at campus level. The lecturer participant reported as follows:

Lecturer A: *“In case of frequently absent students, we normally do interventions with students: phone them, issue warnings and, if the behaviour continues, the student receives a final warning and commits herself or himself to attend. If not, so the student should de-register.”*

Upon analysis of the M and E report it has been found that when compared to the previous year, attendance for 2019 has decreased rapidly. It was found that the high rate of absenteeism is by female students, especially in programmes like Office Administration and Management. Only a few males are registered for this programme: only four of five males of 60 students. Another lecturer participant provides the following additional information:

Lecturer E: *“Yes, we do compile attendance percentages for the relevant people but there is no feedback from them. The behaviour continues, even though we report.”*

The information provided by the lecturers is also questionable, as there is no proof that it is authentic. Lecturers are responsible for the register and submitting the percentages, of which the correctness thereof cannot be proven. The control of registers on the campuses therefore still has gaps.



#### **4.8.3. Code of conduct for college students**

On all three campuses, students receive a diary with the student code of conduct at the beginning of every academic year. The student code of conduct is incorporated with the DHET Public Further Education and Training College Attendance and Punctuality policy. It is the responsibility of all students after registering to sign the code of conduct and to adhere to the lawful instructions thereof through the office of the Student Support Officer (SSO).

The student is mandated to adhere to the contents of the code of conduct. The underlying principle of the student code of conduct state is that class attendance is the responsibility of the student. If students do not attend classes regularly, the relevant steps would be followed to intervene. All the matters pertaining to class attendance will also be guided by the DHET Public Further Education and Training College Attendance and Punctuality policy.

The DHET Public Further Education and Training College Attendance and Punctuality policy, Section 5, mentions the three stages to control unauthorised absence when dealing with absenteeism:

- (1) Stage one – the formal warning but not for more than three 3 times before the second stage;
- (2) Stage two – the formal absence review meeting with lecturers and programme managers discussing disciplinary warnings. In this meeting the reasons for the students' absence are discussed, with the support needed and the proposed methods to catch up on missed work.
- (3) Stage 3 – a formal hearing with the academic manager. Where attendance is affected by authorised absence, it is still necessary to address the matter directly with the student and institute the above processes where a trend of absence emerges and exceeds 20% of the class time at any given time in the programme. Where appropriate, parents should be involved to address issues of attendance and punctuality. It is also imperative that they receive information on attendance and punctuality as soon as it becomes a cause for concern. The college student code of

conduct is in line with the DHET Public Further Education and Training College Attendance and Punctuality policy.

#### **4.9. Conclusion**

The above findings indicate that student absenteeism is a serious problem on all three campuses. The lecturers acknowledge the fact that absenteeism is a problem. The findings were presented into themes and subdivided into subthemes. The three themes identified are personal factors, college-based factors and socioeconomic factors. The lecturers and students indicated that the main problem or common problem is the lack of transport money that could lead to student absenteeism. All participants are complaining about NSFAS, which play a significant role in student absenteeism. Strategies employed by lecturers to reduce the problem of student absenteeism were presented in detail.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents recommendations about the identified factors causing student absenteeism in TVET colleges in the North West in the Bojanala District. Recommendations were made on how lecturers and college management could reduce and deal with the problem of student absenteeism. An underpinning presumption of the study was that student absenteeism is associated with students' poor performance and poses difficulties in teaching and learning.

The study was intended to make lecturers aware of the problem of poor student attendance in TVET Colleges. The main aim of the study was to make lecturers aware of and to understand the challenges and the reasons why certain students experience an attendance problem at the TVET colleges. The research study is rooted in the researcher's experience as a lecturer in the TVET college sector and the focus is on the other lecturers' experiences of student absenteeism and how they dealt with it.

An understanding of the factors that contribute to student absenteeism can be used to help management to improve their policies on minimising the problem of student absenteeism in TVET colleges. The assumption is that it is best to understand the reasons for the problem of student absenteeism in order to improve the situation. The main question and sub questions were used to offer recommendations to help lecturers, students and education managers to decrease student non-attendance.

### **5.2. COMPARISON OF THE FACTORS FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW AND THE FINDINGS**

There is a close relationship between the literature and the findings. The factors in the literature that contribute to student absenteeism were also highlighted by the lecturers and students that participated in the study. Most of the factors were also mentioned in the literature review. Further, all the lecturers who participated in the interviews acknowledged that student absenteeism was indeed a serious problem.

From the literature review it became clear that student absenteeism emanated from student personal factors, college-based factors and socioeconomic factors.

The students and lecturers on all three campuses who participated in the study acknowledged that a lack of transport money is a common problem, which was confirmed in the literature review. The SAHRC (2006:49) also stated that money for transport is a serious challenge to parents. The researcher found that financial problems were the cause of students not attending classes and eventually dropping out. In this regard, Kumar-Raj (2011) emphasised that student dropout and poor academic achievement in colleges are caused by continued student non-attendance.

The researcher found that most of the students were from a poor family background. Lecturers in the study acknowledged that the poor background of students is a contributing factor to poor attendance. Chang and Romero (2008) supported the finding that students from low-earning families were likely to miss class because of challenges related to transport and health, and the fact that they were not exposed to formal early childhood development. The Nelson Mandela Foundation in their research report stated that South African students were not attending college, as their parents wanted them to work and provide food for their families.

Lecturers in the study confirmed that students heading families is a factor that contributes to student absenteeism. The literature review revealed that students in child-headed families had several household responsibilities and the difficulties at home take their focus away from learning, which could influence student attendance significantly. The lecturer participants on all three campuses agreed that there was a high rate of pregnancy. The literature supported the finding that teenage pregnancy was closely connected with college student absenteeism. Kearney (2008:251) reaffirmed that being pregnant and its related problems or difficulties often caused students to miss college.

Personal factors of students contribute to student absenteeism, such as a lack of interest in the subject, attitude towards lecturers, peer pressure, and a lack of responsibility, self-discipline, motivation as well as menstruation period pains. The literature review reaffirmed that student personal factors were related to student absenteeism (McCoach & Siegle, 2003). Furthermore, the negative academic self-

perception of students, negative attitude towards lecturers and low level of motivation contributed to a high rate of absenteeism.

It was found that student absenteeism led to problems relating to teaching and learning. Lecturer participants admitted that teaching and learning are affected when the students are not in class. Lecturers were forced to repeat the lessons that had already been taught, which was a waste of time. In addition, unhealthy relationships between lecturers and students were recognised as a cause of student absenteeism.

The findings on all three campuses that participated in the study show that lecturers' attitudes towards students affected student attendance. Kearney (2008) stated that unhealthy relationships between students and lecturers led to the non-attendance of students. Late coming of students and incompetent lecturers were also mentioned by the participants on all three campuses as contributing factors to student absenteeism.

The findings show that lecturers even take on the role of motivational speakers as a strategy to reduce student absenteeism. Lecturers believed that these motivational talks strengthen their relationships with students. Speaking to students about their own situation and experiences also motivate students.

Reward was identified as the best strategy to encourage student attendance. Rewarding students for good performance boosted student morale and confidence. The findings show that rewarding students in different ways serve as encouragement for students to attend. Pienaar (2011:161) stressed, that lecturers should give students rewards, provide feedback to students and communicate what is required of them.

The lecturer participants on all three campuses mentioned different strategies to decrease student absenteeism. Lecturers said that they do not only teach students in the class, but they act as parents to every student. Peer mentoring is also a good strategy. A caring relationship with students and lecturers intervening when students are faced with problems can also reduce student absenteeism. Nieman and Pienaar (2011:83) argued that students might attempt to breakout demanding circumstances at their campus through non-attendance, thus significant that TVET lecturers reduce

the amounts of strain undergone by students. This can be done if the lecturers have a caring relationship with students. Lecturers ought to show a concerned viewpoint and students would see that lecturers have their attentions at heart (Pienaar, 2011).

Some lecturers call students, meet with them and even visit their homes to find out the cause of the problem. Concerted and collective strategies such as parent involvement can reduce student absenteeism, as mentioned by the lecturer participants on all three campuses.

With regard to the aforementioned, there are similarities between the causes of student absenteeism and the strategies according to this research study on the one hand and the factors mentioned in the literature on the other hand. The findings show that all three campuses grapple with the same problems with regard to student absenteeism. However, other unexpected factors causing student absenteeism also came to light in the study that were not mentioned in the literature review, namely timetable clashes, mismanagement of attendance registers by the lecturers, the NSFAS bursary, and students being disowned by parents.

### **5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher made recommendations centred on the research questions below.

#### **(a) Main question**

- How do TVET colleges experience student absenteeism?

#### **(b) Subquestions**

- What are the perceived personal factors of students that may contribute to high absenteeism?
- How is student absenteeism managed in TVET colleges?

The recommendations are presented according to the findings of the study which serve as answers to the above questions.

### **5.3.1. Recommendations based on students' personal factors**

#### **5.3.1.1. Lack of interest in the subject**

The most common factor in the findings is the lack of interest in the subject, which leads to boredom in students and as a result the students decide not to attend class.

The researcher therefore recommends the following:

- (a) The college management should review the competency and placement (CAP) test.

The CAP test should be implemented properly and effectively in order to determine the complexities and capabilities of the student. People dealing with student placement should be able to check the authenticity of the students' results.

- (b) The DHET should revise the entry level of NC(V) programmes.

Currently the TVET colleges' admission requirement is that the student must pass Grade 9. In basic education the pass requirement is below what TVET colleges are expecting from students, that is, 30% required by basic education compared to 40% expected by TVET colleges. In the core subjects the pass requirement in TVET colleges is 50%, compared to the 40% expected by the Department of Basic Education. The gap is big, and students often do not cope, which may lead to an increase in absenteeism.

- (c) The TVET curriculum should be revised.

The standards in TVET colleges are very high. The curriculum developers should keep in mind the students of TVET colleges. For example, students live in a digital era, and they are the digital generation. Curriculum developers should accommodate and consider the students when developing curricula.

- (d) TVET colleges should reduce the theoretical component and add to the practical component.

Students in TVET colleges are generally not interested in writing notes and they have a short concentration span. They therefore get bored easily. For this reason the

curriculum should be more flexible and in line with the students' lifestyle, which could reduce the problem of absenteeism.

(e) The DHET could revive or relaunch the so-called Manpower Centres.

These Manpower Centres allowed students to learn through practice. Skills programmes were implemented easily and are suitable for the students who find the theory component difficult in class. An entry level of Grade 9 would be suitable in this regard. The entry level of TVET colleges, on the other hand, could be for students who passed or failed Grade 12. It is a fact that students who completed Grade 12 would do better than students who are in Grade 9. TVET colleges as institutions of higher education and training would be better suited to work with students who are capable of furthering their studies in universities. Students find level two already very difficult. It would be even more difficult to pass levels three and four, as the difficulty level increases as the students' progress.

(f) The number of periods per day should be reviewed for students.

The students are now in higher education and not in high school anymore. There must therefore be a shift between basic education and higher education, and for this reason there must be fewer periods. As mentioned before, the students generally have a short concentration span, and having too many periods poses a challenge for them.

#### **5.3.1.2. Attitude towards lecturers**

The research study confirmed that a negative attitude towards lecturers contribute to student non-attendance. If a student has a negative attitude towards a lecturer, the student may hate the subject of that particular lecturer, which may result in poor attendance.

The researcher therefore recommends the following:

- (a) Students should understand their role and take their college work more seriously.
- (b) The college must introduce educational programmes that emphasise the significance of good relationships with lecturers.



- (c) Good communication skills between lecturers and students should be encouraged.

#### **5.3.1.3. Peer pressure**

Peer pressure is also confirmed as a factor that contributes to student absenteeism. The findings revealed that students are easily influenced by others. To deal with the problem of peer pressure, the researcher recommends the following:

- (a) Lecturers should have clear conversations with students and talk to address them in a friendly manner. In this way lecturers, rather than students' peers only, will also be more approachable.

#### **5.3.1.4. Menstruation periods affecting attendance**

The study confirmed that menstruation periods pains is a problem that contributes to student absenteeism.

The researcher recommends the following:

- (a) Student Support in colleges should host information sessions to make students aware of menstruation and emphasise that it is not an illness.

#### **5.3.1.5. Lack of responsibility, self-discipline and motivation**

Lack of responsibility, self-discipline and motivation pose a serious challenge to NC(V) students. It is important for students to make an informed decision regarding their future. Colleges must assist students to be motivated, therefore the researcher recommends the following:

- (a) Colleges must offer proper guidance about the programmes offered and provide comprehensive information regarding courses offered.
- (b) Colleges must partner with businesses to give students an opportunity to experience and participate in employment.

- (c) Student Support services at colleges should provide proper induction programmes to students to motivate students and to ensure that they take responsibility for their studies.

### **5.3.2. Recommendations based on college-based factors**

#### **5.3.2.1. Late coming**

The findings found that late coming was a main concern on all the campuses that participated in the study. It was revealed that all three campuses do not have common procedures for dealing with late coming.

Based on this finding, the researcher recommends the following:

- (a) The DHET management should develop a procedure for late coming.

The policy should clearly indicate the procedure when the behaviour persists, as the DHET policy states that students who come late should not be excluded from the class.

- (b) The college management should have a uniform procedure across the three campuses on how to deal with late coming.

Templates for late coming should be designed and used by all role players on all the campuses in order to deal with the problem in a uniform manner.

- (c) Seniors in the college must report the late coming of students to parents at an early stage.

- (d) The Student Support (SS) office must negotiate with local or nearby bus services to provide students with transport or school buses.

#### **5.3.2.2. Lecturer attitude towards students**

It was found that the lecturers' attitude towards students was a contributing factor to student absenteeism. An adverse attitude by the lecturers could cause students to drop out from the college. Kearney (2008) and Reid (2005) pointed out that unhealthy relationships between lecturers and students may cause students to stay absent. It is recommended that the following should be done to overcome the problem:

- (a) Lecturers must learn good communication skills, as good communication will help to improve relationships between lecturers and students.

#### **5.3.2.3. Incompetent lecturers**

It was found that perceived incompetence of lecturers by students often lead to student non-attendance. The following is therefore recommended:

- (a) Colleges must deal with the problem of incompetence of lecturers.

The problem of incompetent lecturers could be resolved in the following manner:

- Focus groups must discuss the problem.
- Lecturers must be encouraged to follow best practice.
- Lecturers must be passionate about their job.
- Lecturers must prepare before lessons commence.
- Lecturers must have respect and develop an ethical and caring spirit.

#### **5.3.2.4. Mismanagement of attendance registers by the lecturers**

Findings revealed that the management of registers create several difficulties. The researcher recommends the following:

- (a) Colleges must have one register at least for a term.

It will avoid the printing of too many registers per week. Printing registers once a term will alleviate the problem in case of a system failure. It will also prevent students writing their names on too many pages, and will help the lecturer to keep track of who writes their names and who does not. The registers will also not get lost, as the lecturers do not have to deal with separate printed copies of too many groups and too many different levels.

- (b) The colleges must use an electronic system to monitor attendance.

TVET colleges must prepare students for the workplace, which means that students must be responsible. Manual registers take the focus away from the mandate of

TVET colleges as institutions of higher learning to prepare students for the workplace. An electronic system will reduce paper work and save time, which will give lecturers more time to concentrate on teaching and learning.

#### **5.3.2.5. NSFAS Bursary**

The findings revealed that non-payment of the NSFAS bursary may cause absenteeism. Students complained about not receiving the NSFAS bursary even if they have applied, while others complained about the late payment of the bursary. The non-payment of the NSFAS bursary is even used as an excuse by those who have been paid on time. The researcher recommends the following:

- (a) NSFAS should pay the money for transport directly to the transport service and not to the students.

This will prevent a situation where students spend money intended for transport on other things. For this reason, the researcher suggested that the SS office negotiate with the bus services. When students apply for NSFAS, they should provide proof of transport to assist the bursary office in terms of transport arrangements.

- (b) All campuses should have accommodation for students, and the bursary should be paid directly to the accommodation services.

- (c) The criteria for awarding NSFAS bursaries should be reviewed by the college.

#### **5.3.2.6. Lecturer management and challenges of absenteeism in the classroom**

The study findings confirmed that lecturers face challenges in respect of non-attendance, which affects teaching and learning. This problem is caused mainly by the financial situation of students. The researcher therefore recommends the following:

- (a) HODs and Student Support should liaise with parents in the form of home visits to determine the exact reasons for non-attendance. This will assist the HODs to implement intervention programmes for every instance of non-attendance.

- (b) Colleges must develop catch-up programmes to accommodate students who stay absent because of a lack of finances. The programmes could run on a weekly basis in which lecturers can put aside some days in a week to assist absentees.

### **5.3.3 Recommendations based on socioeconomic factors**

#### **5.3.3.1. Poor family background**

Households of little socio-economic class, particularly those with constrained social money, in informally and physically side-line places and where important family associates are not working, is frequently absent (De Witte, et al. 2013:10). One of the factors that contribute to student absenteeism is poor family background. Many students from a poor family background are excluded, and they do not get support. Some of these students attend college and are even most likely performing well in class, but they are not getting enough support and often drop out. However, even when the students drop out, they still receive their bursaries. The researcher therefore recommends the following:

- (a) Students and their family background must be properly screened during the approval process of bursaries.
- (b) The payment of the NSFAS bursary should be fast-tracked.

Early bursary payout may reduce the problem of non-attendance. The times when bursaries are paid need to be reviewed. Students register in January hoping to get the money on time, but they but only receive the money in September. It is difficult for them to come to college while the bursary has still not been paid.

- (c) The college management should improve efforts to increase the participation of parents in order to improve the turnout of students and decrease student non-attendance.

#### **5.3.3.2. Lack of transport money**

The findings of the study reaffirmed that a lack of transport money is a key factor contributing to student absenteeism. Some students rely on social grants, some

head families and have to work odd jobs for their survival. These students therefore cannot afford transport money. The researcher therefore recommends the following:

- (a) Students who qualify for a bursary must be encouraged to apply for the NFSAS bursary when they register at the colleges.
- (b) Colleges should arrange for free or affordable transport of students with local bus companies.

#### **5.3.3.3. Student pregnancy**

The findings revealed that the pregnancy rates at TVET colleges are very high and contributes to student absenteeism. Lecturers confirmed that student pregnancy is a problem that needs attention. The researcher recommends the following:

- (a) Colleges should assist parents to guide their teenagers in choosing better options for their future rather than becoming parents prematurely.
- (b) Both parents and lecturers should emphasise the importance of education for the future of young people.
- (c) Colleges should educate students on the prevention of teenage pregnancy through seminars, awareness campaigns, and so on.
- (d) The DHET should include a section on student pregnancy in the DHET Public Further Education and Training College Attendance and Punctuality policy.

Lecturers need guidelines on how to deal with pregnant students, for example, how to handle pregnancy-related discomfort by students, procedure for handling students going into labour, and so on.

#### **5.4. General recommendations**

The research findings revealed different strategies on how to manage and control the problem of absenteeism. The researcher recommends the following:

- (a) Lecturers must be passionate about their jobs to improve healthy relationships with students.

- (b) Complete procedures on how to handle non-attendance should be developed with due consideration of the factors that add to non-attendance.
- (c) Lectures must be creative to alleviate boredom. They should also employ different teaching styles, try different methods and decide what is best suited for students.
- (d) Lectures must divert from the class content by relating the content with real-life situations. They can also relate their or other people's real-life stories, or the stories of other students to motivate students to change their ways and behaviour.
- (e) The management must reconsider parent evening meetings. Parent involvement will ensure that parents will know about their children's attendance and progress, and will aid in reducing student absenteeism.
- (f) Management must compile an extensive management programme to monitor, control and correct the attendance of students.
- (g) TVET colleges must employ psychologists and social workers to assist students with their problems, burdens and challenges relating to socioeconomic factors. Lecturers are not always equipped to deal with these problems. Professional people have the expertise to deal with the problems of students.
- (h) Management must intervene timeously when a problem of student absenteeism is detected.

### **5.5. Limitations of the study**

North West Province has nine TVET colleges, but the focus of this research study was only on one TVET college in the North West Province, comprising three campuses. The researcher is working on one of the campuses under study. Some of the students were also not willing to give information required by the researcher, as they knew the researcher. Furthermore, the study was limited to the number of students and lecturers who participated in the study.

## **5.6 Delimitations of the study**

The research study mainly focused on exploring student absenteeism in TVET colleges but specifically on three campuses in the Bojanala District in the North West. Not all lecturers and students participated in the study; only selected lecturers and students were interviewed. The criteria for the participation of lecturers were lecturers with more than three years lecturing experience, while the criteria for the participation of students are students with attendance problems.

The focus of the study was the experiences and views of students with a high level of absenteeism. The qualitative method was used to gather data through semi-structured interviews.

## **5.7. Conclusion**

The research study highlighted the findings of the study and provided recommendations on how to reduce student absenteeism on the three campuses in the Bojanala District, in the North West. Lecturers and students who participated in the study provided insight in their experiences regarding student absenteeism. Student non-attendance adversely impacted on student performance as well as in teaching and learning. Most of the time students who were always absent performed poorly in lecture room compared to students attended regularly. Absenteeism resulted in student drop-out from the college. Thus lead to the increased rate of illiteracy in the communities. Recommendations were made based on the findings. Non-attendance gives rise to several problems. Colleges should therefore involve all stakeholders and employ a practical approach to reduce the high rate of absenteeism.

The intention of the study was achieved, namely to provide solutions to the problem. The research study identified clear factors contributing to student absenteeism as mentioned by lecturers and students, as well as the challenges faced by students. When commencing with student non-attendance need an approximate and actual or operational monitoring technique. In an attempt to manage the problem of student non-attendance, the process can be helped by the extents within the power of



Department of Higher Education and Training. The research has provided insight which strived to the improvement of managing the student non-attendance especially the socio-economic factors background.

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## APPENDICES



Appendix number	Name of appendix	Attached YES or NO
Appendix A	Proof or registration	Yes
Appendix B	Participation observation schedule	Yes
Appendix C	Interview questions	Yes
Appendix D	Request permission to conduct a research	Yes
Appendix E	Participant information sheet	Yes
Appendix F	Consent to participate in the study	Yes
Appendix G	DHET application form to conduct research	Yes
Appendix H	Ethical clearance certificate	Yes
Appendix I	Editing proof	Yes

0958

KASITA M P MRS  
PRIVATE BAG X 5060  
BRITS  
0250

STUDENT NUMBER : 4909-461-0

ENQUIRIES TEL : 0861670411  
FAX : (012)429-4150  
eMAIL : mandd@unisa.ac.za

2019-04-01

Dear Student

I hereby confirm that you have been registered for the current academic year as follows:

Proposed Qualification: MED (EDUC MANAGEMENT) (98405)

CODE	PAPER	S NAME OF STUDY UNIT	NQF crdts	LANG.	PROVISIONAL EXAMINATION EXAM.DATE	CENTRE(PLACE)
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
DFEDU95		MED - Education Management	**	E		

Study units registered without formal exams:

You are referred to the "MyRegistration" brochure regarding fees that are forfeited on cancellation of any study units.

# Your attention is drawn to University rules and regulations ([www.unisa.ac.za/register](http://www.unisa.ac.za/register)).

Please note the new requirements for reregistration and the number of credits per year which state that students registered for the first time from 2013, must complete 36 NQF credits in the first year of study, and thereafter must complete 48 NQF credits per year.

Students registered for the MBA, MBL and DBL degrees must visit the SBL's ESONline for study material and other important information.

Readmission rules for Honours: Note that in terms of the Unisa Admission Policy academic activity must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the University during each year of study. If you fail to meet this requirement in the first year of study, you will be admitted to another year of study. After a second year of not demonstrating academic activity to the satisfaction of the University, you will not be re-admitted, except with the express approval of the Executive Dean of the College in which you are registered. Note too, that this study programme must be completed within three years. Non-compliance will result in your academic exclusion, and you will therefore not be allowed to re-register for a qualification at the same level on the National Qualifications Framework in the same College for a period of five years after such exclusion, after which you will have to re-apply for admission to any such qualification.

Readmission rules for M&D: Note that in terms of the Unisa Admission Policy, a candidate must complete a Master's qualification within three years. Under exceptional circumstances and on recommendation of the Executive Dean, a candidate may be allowed an extra (fourth) year to complete the qualification. For a Doctoral degree, a candidate must complete the study programme within six years. Under exceptional circumstances, and on recommendation by the Executive Dean, a candidate may be allowed an extra (seventh) year to complete the qualification.

BALANCE ON STUDY ACCOUNT: 13800.00

Payable on or before:

Immediately:13800.00	2019/03/31: 0.00	2019/05/15: 0.00	2019/08/15: 0.00
	2019/11/15: 0.00	2020/03/15: 0.00	

Yours faithfully,

Dr F Goolam  
Registrar

6521 0 00 0



University of South Africa  
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
[www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)

## **APPENDIX B: PARTICIPATION OBSERVATION SCHEDULE**

1. Can student performance be affected by absenteeism?
2. Does late coming have an impact on absenteeism?
3. Do lecturer plays a role in combating student absenteeism?
4. How absenteeism affects teaching and learning?
5. Can bunking of classes be related to absenteeism?
6. Can travelling have an impact on absenteeism?

## **APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LECTURERS**

1. What is your experience in regard with student's absenteeism in the classes you have?
2. What do you think are the main reasons for student's absenteeism?
3. Which ways do you use to inspire your students to attend your class?
4. What action do you take to students who are frequently absent from your classroom?
5. How do you manage student's absenteeism?
6. Do you experience any challenges when managing student's absenteeism in your classroom?
7. Is there any strategy used to control absenteeism? – Are any programs in place to deal with the problem of absenteeism?
8. Can you think of program the college does not have that will assist college to deal with the problem of absenteeism?

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR STUDENTS**

1. Can you please tell me about yourself?
2. What time do you sleep at night? What time do you leave home for college?
3. Do you use transport to get to college?
4. Can you estimate time for you to get to college?
5. Can you tell me about your attendance at college?
6. How often do you miss an entire day of college?
7. What do you think are the reasons for absenteeism?
8. What is your thinking surrounding high rate of absenteeism in college?
9. Can you think of anything that will assist you more interested in coming to college?

**APPENDIX: D**

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT ORBIT TVET COLLEGE.**

**TITLE: EXPLORING STUDENT ABSENTEEISM AT TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION  
COLLEGE IN NORTH WEST, BOJANALA DISTRICT.**

**Date: 28 MAY 2019**

**MR D.F. MOKOENA**

**THE PRINCIPAL**

**014 592 7014**

**Email:dmokoena@orbitcollege.co.za**

Dear Mr Mokoena

I Mokotsi Patricia Kasita, am doing research under supervision of Prof. Vimbi Mahlangu a Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Management towards a M Ed at the University of South Africa. The aim of the study is to make lecturers aware to see what the problem is, why some students are having an attendance problem and exploring experiences or the fact of the student high absenteeism rate among three campuses.

Your college has been selected because it is purposefully identified as a possible participant to provide valuable experience related to my research topic. The study will entail the lecturers and students, the participation in the study will be voluntary. It will involve interviews in a mutually agreed site after college hours. Participant will be granted permission to withdraw from the study if the wish at any time without negative results.

The research study will be useful for the college personnel on assessing a need for new techniques for dealing and handling students with the absenteeism problem. There are no anticipated risks that the participant will be exposed to. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Feedback procedure will entail no value of judgement will be made under circumstances participant will be informed of the finding of the study by availing a copy of my final thesis to each of the selected TVET colleges libraries and each will be given one copy if they put a request.

I will be very pleased if my request is favourably and speedily considered.

Yours sincerely



Kasita MP

Lecturer

## **APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM AND ASSENT (PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET)**

Date: 28 May 2019

### **TITLE: EXPLORING STUDENT ABSENTEEISM AT TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COLLEGE IN NORTH WEST, BOJANALA DISTRICT.**

#### **DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT**

My name is Mokotsi Patricia Kasita and I am doing research under supervision of Professor Vimbi Mahlangu, a Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Management toward M Ed at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled exploring student absenteeism at technical and vocational education college in North West, Bojanala District.

#### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

The study is expected to collect important information that could help to explore experiences or the fact of the student high absenteeism rate. The outcomes in the study will contribute to the body of knowledge and to share them will all stakeholders to find ways of dealing with student absenteeism.

#### **WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?**

You are invited because you have experienced the problem of absenteeism and you are likely to have knowledge and more information about the phenomenon under study. I obtained your contacts from the college.

#### **WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?**

The study involves semi-structured interviews. Open-ended questions will be prepared. The estimated time for interviews will be 30-40 minutes for each participant.

#### **CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?**

Participation in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

#### **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

As I mentioned in the purpose of the study, the college management, lecturing staff, students and the society at large will benefit through gaining important knowledge to better understand the problem of absenteeism and what to contribute in reducing this high rate of absenteeism.

#### **ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?**

There are no anticipated risks that the participant will be exposed to. In case of any injury which is unlikely, I will look for help from the Head of Department and I will contact my supervisor for assistance.

**WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research. Your answers will be given a code number and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any participation, or other research reporting methods. Access to the data will be granted to the researcher and the supervisor only. Your anonymous data will be used for research purpose only and treated as confidential.

**HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?**

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked drawer for future reference and handed over to my supervisor for safe keeping. Electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Review and approval if applicable. Hard copies will be shredded and electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer.

**WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?**

There will be no compensation for participating in the study.

**HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?**

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the College of Education, Unisa, copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

**HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?**

If you would like to be informed of the final findings, please contact Mokotsi Patricia Kasita on 082 0525 321 or email: [kasitamp@webmail.co.za](mailto:kasitamp@webmail.co.za). The findings will be accessible for a period of five years. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Professor Vimbi Mahlangu, email: [mahlavp@unisa.ac.za](mailto:mahlavp@unisa.ac.za), 012 4298 550.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study

Thank you



Mokotsi Patricia Kasita

## APPENDIX F

### CONSENT/ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the interview.


I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print) MOKOTSI PATRICIA KASITA

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's signature

*28 May 2019*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



# APPENDIX G: DHET APPLICATION FORM TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

10 No. 39583

GOVERNMENT GAZETTE, 8 JANUARY 2016



higher education  
& training  
Department  
Higher Education and Training  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## DHET 004: APPENDIX 1:

### APPLICATION FORM FOR STUDENTS TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN PUBLIC COLLEGES

#### 1. APPLICANT INFORMATION

1.1.	Title (Dr /Mr /Mrs /Ms)	Mrs	
1.2	Name and surname	MOKOTSI PATRICIA KASITA	
1.3	Postal address	PRIVATE BAG 25060 BRITS 0250	
1.4	Contact details	Tel	012 381 5700
		Cell	082 052 5321
		Fax	N/A
		Email	kasitamp@webmail.co.za
1.5	Name of institution where enrolled	UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA	
1.6	Field of study		
1.7	Qualification registered for	Please tick relevant option:	
		Doctoral Degree (PhD)	
		Master's Degree	X
		Other (please specify)	

#### 2. DETAILS OF THE STUDY

2.1	Title of the study	EXPLORING STUDENT ABSENTEEISM AT TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COLLEGE IN NORTH WEST, BOTANALA DISTRICT
2.2	Purpose of the study	The study is expected to collect important information that could help to explore experiences or the fact of the student high absenteeism rate.

This gazette is also available free online at [www.gpwonline.co.za](http://www.gpwonline.co.za)

## DHET 004: APPENDIX 1: APPLICATION FORM FOR STUDENTS TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN PUBLIC COLLEGES

## 3. PARTICIPANTS AND TYPE/S OF ACTIVITIES TO BE UNDERTAKEN IN THE COLLEGE

Please indicate the types of research activities you are planning to undertake in the College, as well as the categories of persons who are expected to participate in your study (for example, lecturers, students, College Principals, Deputy Principals, Campus Heads, Support Staff, Heads of Departments), including the number of participants for each activity.

		Expected participants (e.g. students, lecturers, College Principal)	Number of participants
3.1	Complete questionnaires	a) b) c) d) e)	
3.2	Participate in individual interviews	Expected participants a) LECTURERS b) STUDENTS c) d) e)	Number of participants SIX (6) TWELVE (12)
3.3	Participate in focus group discussions/ workshops	Expected participants a) b) c) d) e)	Number of participants
3.4	Complete standardised tests (e.g. Psychometric Tests)	Expected participants a) b) c) d) e)	Number of participants
3.5	Undertake observations Please specify	NON-PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION	
3.6	Other Please specify		



# **DHET 004: APPENDIX 1: APPLICATION FORM FOR STUDENTS TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN PUBLIC COLLEGES**

## **4. SUPPORT NEEDED FROM THE COLLEGE**

Please indicate the type of support required from the College (Please tick relevant option/s)		
Type of support	Yes	No
4.1 The College will be required to identify participants and provide their contact details to the researcher.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2 The College will be required to distribute questionnaires/instruments to participants on behalf of the researcher.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4.3 The College will be required to provide official documents. Please specify the documents required below - Attendance registers (Pass & Quarterly) - Absenteeism policy (College) / Attendance - College code of conduct - Classroom code of conduct / Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.4 The College will be required to provide data (only if this data is not available from the DHET). Please specify the data fields required, below - Background information of students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5 Other, please specify below  N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## **5. DOCUMENTS TO BE ATTACHED TO THE APPLICATION**

The following 2 (two) documents must be attached as a prerequisite for approval to undertake research in the College	
5.1	Ethics Clearance Certificate Issued by a University Ethics Committee
5.2	Research proposal approved by a University

# DHET 004: APPENDIX 1: APPLICATION FORM FOR STUDENTS TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN PUBLIC COLLEGES

## 6. DECLARATION BY THE APPLICANT

I undertake to use the information that I acquire through my research, in a balanced and a responsible manner. I furthermore take note of, and agree to adhere to the following conditions:

- a) I will schedule my research activities in consultation with the said College/s and participants in order not to interrupt the programme of the said College/s.
- b) I agree that involvement by participants in my research study is voluntary, and that participants have a right to decline to participate in my research study.
- c) I will obtain signed consent forms from participants prior to any engagement with them.
- d) I will obtain written parental consent of students under 18 years of age, if they are expected to participate in my research.
- e) I will inform participants about the use of recording devices such as tape-recorders and cameras, and participants will be free to reject them if they wish.
- f) I will honour the right of participants to privacy, anonymity, confidentiality and respect for human dignity at all times. Participants will not be identifiable in any way from the results of my research, unless written consent is obtained otherwise.
- g) I will not include the names of the said College/s or research participants in my research report, without the written consent of each of the said individuals and/or College/s.
- h) I will send the draft research report to research participants before finalisation, in order to validate the accuracy of the information in the report.
- i) I will not use the resources of the said College/s in which I am conducting research (such as stationery, photocopies, faxes, and telephones), for my research study.
- j) Should I require data for this study, I will first request data directly from the Department of Higher Education and Training. I will request data from the College/s only if the DHET does not have the required data.
- k) I will include a disclaimer in any report, publication or presentation arising from my research, that the findings and recommendations of the study do not represent the views of the said College/s or the Department of Higher Education and Training.
- l) I will provide a summary of my research report to the Head of the College/s in which I undertook my research, for information purposes.

I declare that all statements made in this application are true and accurate. I accept the conditions associated with the granting of approval to conduct research and undertake to abide by them.

SIGNATURE	<i>M. Kasita</i>
DATE	27/05/2019



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2019/06/12

Ref: **2019/06/12/49096910/41/MC**

Name: Mrs MP Kasita

Student: 49096910

Dear Mrs Kasita

**Decision:** Ethics Approval from  
2019/06/12 to 2022/06/12

**Researcher(s):** Name: Mrs MP Kasita  
E-mail address: 49096910@mylife.unisa.ac.za  
Telephone: +27 82 052 5321

**Supervisor(s):** Name: Prof V Mahlangu  
E-mail address: mahlav@unisa.ac.za  
Telephone: +27 82 755 3154

**Title of research:**

**Exploring student absenteeism at Technical Vocational Education and Training  
Colleges in North West, Bojanala District.**

**Qualification:** MEd in Educational Leadership and Management

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2019/06/12 to 2022/06/12.

*The **low risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2019/06/12 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.



University of South Africa  
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
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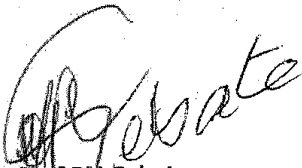
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2022/06/12**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

*Note:*

*The reference number **2019/06/12/49096910/41/MC** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,

  
**Prof AT Motlhabane**  
**CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC**  
motlhat@unisa.ac.za

  
**Prof PM Sebate**  
**ACTING EXECUTIVE DEAN**  
Sebatpm@unisa.ac.za

Approved - decision template – updated 16 Feb 2017

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APPENDIX I: EDITING PROOF

PO Box 356  
Florida Hills  
1716  
17 January 2020

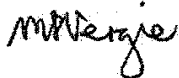
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that the master's dissertation "Exploring student absenteeism at Technical and Vocational Education Colleges in North West, Bojanala District" by Mokotsi Patricia Kasita has been edited.

The onus is, however, on the student to make the changes suggested and to attend to the language editor's queries.

Please direct any enquiries regarding the editing of this dissertation to me.

Kind regards



Malvin Vergie

0835648967

malvinvergie@gmail.com

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.9: Conceptual Framework diagram

Table 2.6.1.: Factors causing student absenteeism illustration model

Table 4.2.1...: Lecturer participant biographical information

Table 4.2.2...: Student participant biographical information

Table 4.3.1...: Themes and Sub-themes